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THE ARABS AND THE WEST

THE ARABS AND THE WEST

by
CLARE HOLLINGWORTH

With 8 Maps



METHUEN & CO LTD, LONDON
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To G. S. H.
whose
deep knowledge and fine judgment
of events in the Middle East have
been invaluable.

PREFACE

MY experiences in the Middle East between 1940 and 1950 convinced me that there was an urgent need for a book which would supply the basic facts and also the general background which the ordinary reader would need in any attempt to understand the political and economic complexities of that region.

This book was written in Paris in 1951, but it is the product of a decade of work which took me into Turkey, Syria, the Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Persia, Libya, the Persian Gulf, and Saudi Arabia.

My original plan was to produce a simple post-war history of the area as an introduction to a more detailed analysis of relations between the Arabs and the Western world. This project was dropped because I discovered that it would require several volumes and would, in the end, be of little value to readers seeking a digestible but comprehensive account of what happened and what is happening in a region which is coming more and more forcibly into the news.

The first section of this book outlines those events in the Middle East between the end of the first world war and the outbreak of the Palestine war which had a marked influence upon either the countries concerned or the general relations between the Arab world and the Western Powers.

The second section deals with the Palestine war of which the true significance seems rarely to be appreciated; in no respect is this failure more marked than in the influence it had upon the relations between the Arabs and the West.

In the third section I discuss the effects the Palestine dispute had upon the political and economic development of the Arab countries, as well as upon the new problem of the defence of the area against aggression from the East. I have also attempted to outline the history of the Middle East up to the end of 1951.

I had hoped that a three-month visit to this fast-changing part of the world early in 1952 would enable me to write a nicely rounded epilogue, bringing the book more or less up to date. Events continue to move at such a truly astonishing pace that any effort to keep up

with them is vain : this section of the ' never-changing East ' now changes almost daily.

I can find no better introduction to this work than a quotation from Elizabeth Monroe's *The Mediterranean in Politics*, where she writes :

' Scholars may feel that I could have done them better service by publishing footnotes and tables, or by writing in greater detail. . . . My answer to them is that I have not neglected research. The light book, if it is to be accurate, demands long reflection upon the facts and figures which would fill the pages of a larger study. I have not set out these statistics and technicalities because I have thought it more important to try and write a book for ordinary people.'

I have also avoided footnotes except where, it being impossible for technical reasons to rewrite in proof, it was essential to note vital changes which have occurred since the book was written, e.g. in the chapter on Egypt.

My deep gratitude is due to those people, Arabs, Jews, British, American, and French, who have so generously and with such warm hospitality shared their learning and their knowledge with me. I wish also to thank the Editor of *The Economist* for permission to reproduce seven maps which originally appeared in his publication.

PARIS,

August 1952.

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INTRODUCTION

THE REGION

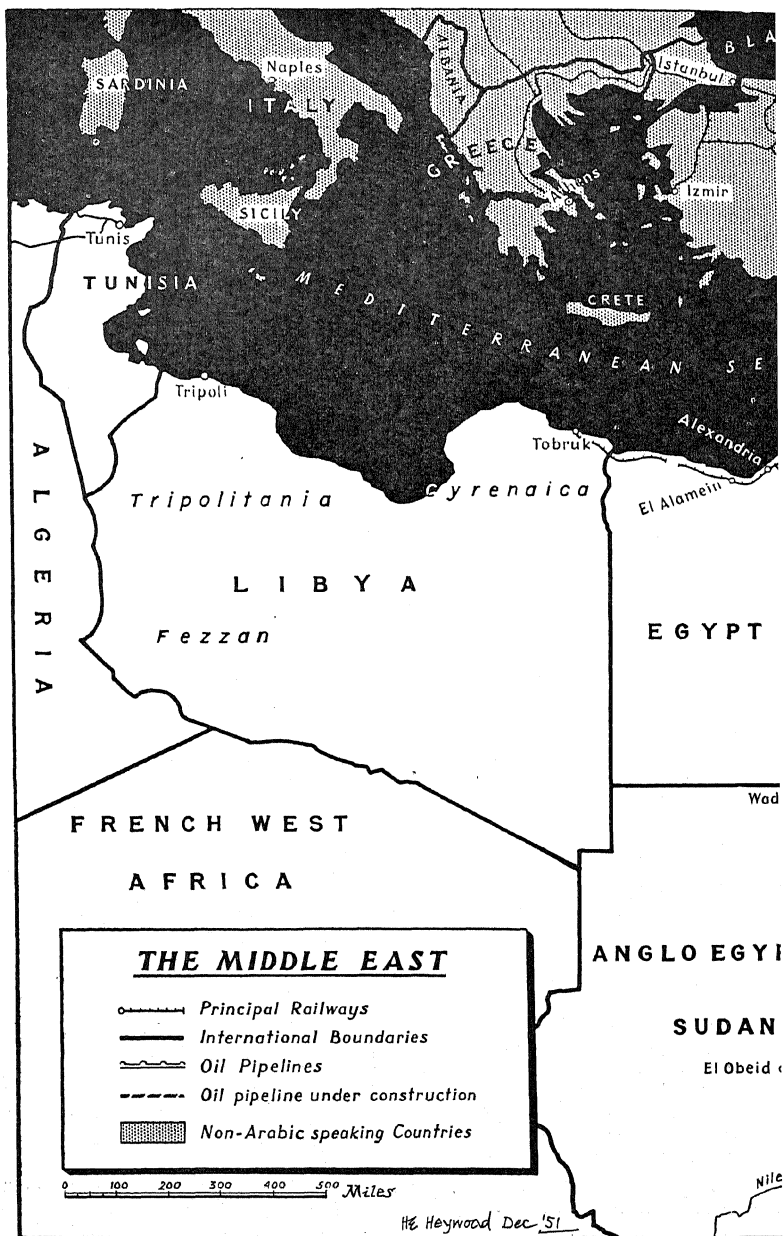
THE Middle East is an extremely difficult region to define, but for the purposes of this book it will be taken to be the seven member states of the Arab League—Egypt, Iraq, Syria, the Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Yemen.¹ It is a large area, covering in all some 830,000 square miles, but except for Egypt, where over-population is already a serious problem, is sparsely inhabited, and three-quarters of it is barren, unproductive and mostly uninhabitable desert. Most of the countries in it have taken some kind of a census, from which it emerges that the total population in 1947 was around 42,000,000—less than the total population of the British Isles—but to-day it is probably nearer 44,000,000.

The Middle Eastern countries have several characteristics in common : they are all backward, some of them are indeed still quite primitive ; they are all Moslem with the exception of the Lebanon, but most have small Christian minorities ; they are all called ‘ Arab ’ countries, but in fact the Egyptians are a race apart produced by the inter-marriage with the aborigines of the succession of conquerors who have dominated the country since the days of the Pharaohs : the Arabs probably made the deepest impression on the country and there is a strong Arab strain in the modern Egyptian. They have the same language, the same religion, and the same hostility to foreigners : in fact, particularly since the last war one of the dominant characteristics of the Middle East as a whole is its xenophobia.

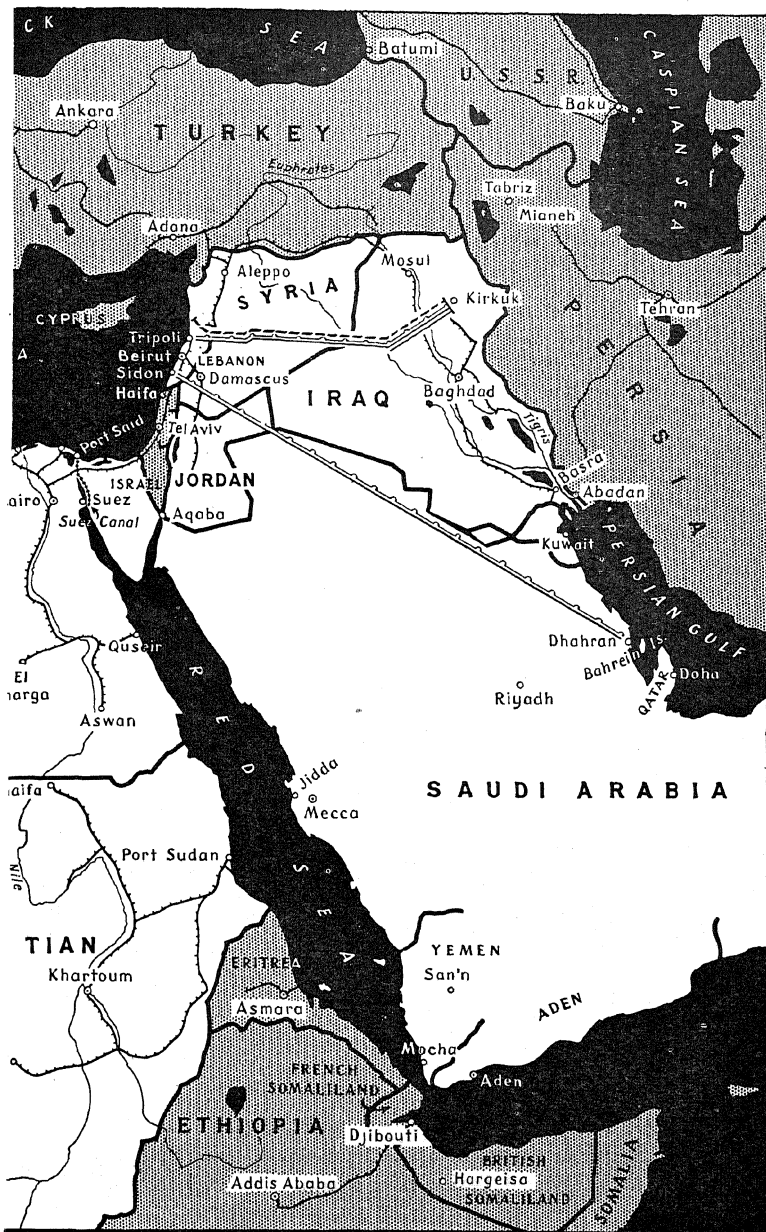
HISTORICAL PRELUDE

The Ottoman Empire established itself at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when Sultan Selim I conquered Egypt, and finally collapsed at the beginning of the twentieth, when Turkey entered the first world war on the side of Germany. During the intervening four hundred years Turkish power and the boundaries of its great Empire fluctuated, but at its height Ottoman domination over the

¹ Geographically, Israel is also part of the Middle East, but for reasons which appear in Part II it is not included in this historical introduction.



MAP I:



THE MIDDLE EAST

Arab world extended from Algeria to the Persian Gulf and from Aleppo to the Indian Ocean. The whole of what is now known as the Middle East was governed from Constantinople, with varying degrees of control, until the outbreak of war in 1914. Even Egypt, which under Mohammed Ali Pasha had virtually achieved independence and so nearly established an empire of its own, and which had in fact been under British military occupation since 1882, was still in 1914 under nominal Turkish suzerainty, although there was no longer any Turkish control of the administration.

To understand the position in the rest of the Middle East it is necessary to consider for a moment the administrative system that had been introduced early in the nineteenth century. The Ottoman Empire was then divided into *vilayet* (provinces, administered by *wali* (governor-generals)). The *vilayet* was sub-divided into *sanjaq* (counties), under *mutasarref* (lieutenant-governors). There were also a few independent *sanjaq* in which the *mutasarref* dealt directly with Constantinople and not through the *wali*.

In 1914 Turkey's Arab possessions, besides Egypt, were Syria, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula. Syria was divided into the *Vilayet* of Aleppo, Beirut and Damascus, and the independent *Sanjaq* of Lebanon and Jerusalem. In Iraq there were the *Vilayet* of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. Although revolt had flared up from time to time and discontent, unrest and agitation were continually growing, Turkey's grasp on Syria and Iraq was still fairly firm. The situation in Arabia was different. A Turkish *wali* ruled in the Hijaz, but his powers were qualified by the prerogatives of the Grand Sharifs, the traditional lords of Mecca and Madina. The Nejd and the Shammar, where the Houses of Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid were struggling for ascendancy, were practically independent of Constantinople although nominally still part of the Empire. And the mountainous, inaccessible and remote Yemen had but recently been re-subdued after yet another of the bloody revolts against Turkish overlordship. Control there was however, divided between the Turks on the coast and the Imam in the highlands.

Turkey's decision to enter the war on the side of Germany had immediate repercussions in the Middle East. England acted swiftly in Egypt. The military occupation became a protectorate, the pro-Turkish Khedive, Abbas Hilmi, was deposed, and, to protect the

Suez Canal and Britain's route to India and the East and also to counter any Germano-Turkish attempt to invade this strategically important area, a huge British base was rapidly built up. At the same time, in order to harass the Turk wherever possible, a revolt of his Arab provinces was planned from Cairo. It is from the sometimes conflicting and always vague promises made to Arab leaders during this period that a great deal of the discontent and bitterness that marked the Middle East in the period between the two wars was germinated. The conflicting ambitions of the Great Powers were also responsible for the emergence after 1918 of several small Arab states mandated to one or other of the Powers in the place of the resurrected Arab Empire to which the leaders of the Revolt aspired. And it was, of course, from these wartime promises that the Palestine problem, far and away the most serious single issue in the modern history of the Middle East, emerged.

Directly she entered the war, Turkey, with Germany close behind her, attempted to bring in the Moslem world against the Allies and brought pressure upon Sharif Husain to declare a *jihad* (holy war). In neither move was she successful, for the Arabs, who had for some time been secretly preparing their own revolt, saw in the war their chance of freedom from the Turkish yoke. The presence of Turkish troops in their lands, however, impelled a certain caution, and the Arab leaders temporised—a game at which they are experts. Britain, for her part, was not slow to appreciate that in the Porte's rebellious Arab subjects she had a potentially useful ally. On the suggestion of Mr. (now Sir) Ronald Storrs, then Oriental Secretary at the Residency in Cairo, and with the backing of Lord Kitchener, preliminary soundings were made in Mecca and other Arab capitals. The negotiations proper were between Sir Henry McMahon, who succeeded Lord Kitchener as High Commissioner in Egypt, and the Sharif Husain, and were carried out through the medium of a series of letters which, couched in terms of considerable ambiguity, laid down each side's terms for an Arab revolt.

This correspondence has since been debated *ad nauseam*, but it does appear to have been finally established that the area which afterwards became Palestine and Transjordan was not, as British sources usually maintain, explicitly excluded from the territories in which Arab independence was to be proclaimed. This is of great importance

in view of Britain's subsequent undertaking to the Jews, whose support was also solicited, in the Balfour Declaration, which was the foundation of the Zionist claims for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

When they had finally concluded their agreement with the Sharif Husain and the Arab Revolt was under way, the British Government were obliged to let their French allies into the secret. France, which had always claimed special rights in the Levant, demanded a say in the disposition of the former Turkish territories, and the two governments appointed delegates, Sir Mark Sykes and M. F. Georges-Picot, to confer on a more acceptable agreement: the Arabs were not consulted, but the subsequent agreement, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, was shown to the Imperial Russian Government, which also had eyes on parts of the Ottoman Empire (as they were outside the Middle East they do not come into this discussion), and was approved. The importance of Russian participation is that, after the Revolution the Bolshevik leaders found the text of the still-secret agreement in their archives and published it.

'The Sykes-Picot Agreement is a shocking document. It is not only the product of greed at its worst, that is to say, of greed allied to suspicion and so leading to stupidity: it also stands out as a startling piece of double-dealing.'

That is the opinion of the late George Antonius, whose book, *The Arab Revolt*, from which the quotation is taken, is far and away the best, most detailed and profound study, from the purely Arab point of view, of the events leading up to the creation of the modern Middle East.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, in short, provided for the division of the land between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf into British and French spheres of influence quite contrary to Britain's undertaking to the Sharif Husain. Later, further to complicate the situation, came the Balfour Declaration, aimed at obtaining the support of the Jews and which seemed to promise them at least a part of Palestine. This is discussed more fully in the chapter on Palestine.

In the early days of the Peace Conference there seemed no reason to suppose that promises to both Jews and Arabs might not be implemented, but the final compromise satisfied no one. The Amir Faisal,

King (as he had then become) Husain's second son, who represented his father, was actually willing to accept 'the effective supervision of a great trustee'—in other words a mandate—but he wanted the Arabs to be united under one government. This did not suit France, or to a lesser degree, Britain. Eventually, after a proposal to send out a commission of inquiry representing Britain, France, Italy, and America had fallen through, an entirely American mission—the King-Crane Commission—spent six weeks visiting Palestine and Syria. Their recommendations, which were almost entirely disregarded, were, in short, that 'Iraq be treated as one country and that the unity of Syria (including Palestine) be similarly preserved, subject to the maintenance of Lebanese autonomy ; that there be one mandate for the whole of Iraq and one for Syria-Palestine ; and that the form of government in each be that of a constitutional monarchy, with the Amir Faisal as king in Syria and another Arab sovereign, to be chosen by plebiscite, to rule over Iraq. They felt bound to recommend that the Zionist programme be greatly reduced, that Jewish immigration be definitely limited, and that the idea of making Palestine into a Jewish Commonwealth be abandoned.'¹ As regards the mandatory Powers, 'they recommended that the United States be asked to undertake the single mandate for all Syria and Great Britain to undertake one for Iraq. They added that if the Syrian mandate could not be assumed by the United States it should be assigned to Great Britain. They found themselves unable to recommend a French mandate.'¹

In the end, the future of the Arab areas of the former Turkish Empire was decided by Great Britain, France, and the United States at the San Remo Conference of April 1920. Syria was to be broken up into three countries : Palestine, the Lebanon, and Syria. Iraq was to remain undivided. Syria and the Lebanon were to be placed under French mandate, Iraq and Palestine under British. The mandate for Palestine carried with it an obligation to apply the Balfour Declaration.

Arab disillusion, steadily growing during the long wrangles since the end of the war, was now complete, and it produced a wave of despair and anger. The position was far worse in Syria, where, since the end of hostilities Faisal had been ruling as king under British supervision, than anywhere else, for the French immediately took

¹ *The Arab Revolt.*

violent charge of the country after bloody fighting around Damascus, and expelled Faisal and his closest associates. In Iraq, the British faced a period of disturbance before the Naqib of Baghdad was persuaded to become president of a Council of State. The Iraqi, and the Arab generally, felt that he had rid himself of the Turkish overlordship at the cost of a new but equally onerous and non-Moslem domination.

There were other causes of discontent which had their origin in the Arab Revolt and agreements then made with the Arab leaders by the British Government. In 1915 the Viceroy of India, acting of course in the name of the British Government, had signed a treaty of alliance with Ibn Saud, then ruler only of the Nejd, on the lines of those previously negotiated with the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms. Except in the negative aspect of denying assistance to the Turk, Ibn Saud made no contribution to the war. He, as head of the Wahhabi movement, was ruler of the Nejd by right of conquest, and he was ambitious to extend his domains. He realized that whilst the British were backing King Husain there was little he could do, but he bided his time. He distributed what arms had been supplied to him for use against the Turks amongst various tribes, which eventually formed the nucleus of his army. British 'arabists' were divided into those who supported Ibn Saud and the Wahhabis, and those who supported the Hashimis, led by King Husain, who himself clearly regarded Arab unity as synonymous with his own kingship. By May 1919 relations between them were so bad that a serious clash occurred near Turaba, where Ibn Saud's forces fell upon and practically annihilated a column under the command of the Emir Abdullah, King Husain's second son. The British Government came to King Husain's aid by sending a strong warning to Ibn Saud, but the omens were far from good. Later in the year the balance of power in the Arabian Peninsula shifted dangerously when Ibn Saud finally defeated his old enemy, Ibn Rashid, and annexed the Shammar, thus bringing his frontier to the confines of Iraq.

Relations between the British Government and King Husain gradually deteriorated. Husain never ceased to remind Britain of her unfulfilled wartime promises, particularly in so far as they concerned Palestine. His subsidy had been ended and he was in serious financial difficulties. Gradually, too, the Wahhabis became more menacing

and more aggressive, and little by little the outlying portions of the Hijaz were quietly absorbed. The climax came in 1924, when Ibn Saud openly marched on the Hijaz ; and when he entered Taif, King Husain abdicated in favour of his son Ali, who himself fled in December 1925, and Ibn Saud became King of Arabia. Husain went first to Aqaba and then to Cyprus, returning to Amman, where by that time his son Abdullah was the ruler, in 1930 to die. Ali had taken refuge in Baghdad, where his brother Faisal was by then king.

In 1921, Abdullah, who had played an outstanding role in the Arab Revolt, crossed the Jordan with the intention of proceeding to Damascus to assist Faisal against the French. Mr. Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, was in Jerusalem at the time, and he persuaded Abdullah to give up his project. In return, the British Government, who, when Syria was placed under French mandate, had extended its sphere of influence across the Jordan, arbitrarily brought into being a new territory, the Emirate of Transjordan, which separated Palestine from the French sphere of influence ; and Abdullah was invited to become its ruler, under the control of the British High Commissioner for Palestine. Abdullah became permanent ruler of Transjordan and eventually its king, but he never entirely relinquished his dream of marching upon Syria and setting himself up as king in Damascus of a reunited Arab Empire. After the French expelled Faisal, the British made him King of Iraq. His wise and enlightened rule was cut short by his premature death in 1933—a serious blow not only to Iraq but to the Arab cause in general.

BETWEEN TWO WARS

The period between the two wars was, for the Arab Middle East, dominated, first by an unceasing struggle for independence and then by the emergence of the Palestine problem. It is necessary, however, to distinguish between the three separate regions : Egypt, which is a Moslem but not, properly speaking, an Arab country ; the central portion, comprising the former Syria and Iraq ; and the Arabian peninsula. Conditions in these three distinct units were different, as was the stage of advancement.

Egypt had been under British military occupation and indeed a measure of British political and administrative control since 1882 and was already a rich and prosperous and, comparatively, a fairly

advanced country. Already, too, even before the 1914-1918 war the first stirrings of a nationalist movement had been observed. This increased very greatly immediately after the war and was an important issue in the Middle East right until the outbreak of the second world war. Two days after the Armistice of 11th November 1918, Al Wafd al Misri (The Egyptian Delegation), which had been formed by all the then political leaders, presented a demand to the British Residency, through its leader, the great national hero Saad Zaghlul Pasha, for permission to go to London to present their case for independence. The demand was refused, and gradually disorders broke out throughout the country which eventually became so serious that martial law was imposed; and in March 1919 Zaghlul Pasha and three of his main supporters were exiled to Malta. Later that year the British Government sent a Commission under Lord Milner to inquire into and report on the future status of Egypt. Zaghlul Pasha, released from Malta, visited London, but would not accept the Milner recommendations, which were that Egyptian independence should be recognized subject to the conclusion of an Anglo-Egyptian treaty of alliance which would guarantee certain British and foreign interests. The new prime minister, Adli Yeghen Pasha, one of the *élite* of Egyptians of Turkish descent who could in those days always be called upon to take control of the country in an emergency, also negotiated with the British Government along the same lines; but the negotiations failed, fresh disorders occurred in Egypt, and Zaghlul Pasha and five of his lieutenants were exiled to the Seychelles. The High Commissioner, Lord Allenby, went to London at the beginning of 1922 and forced the British Government to issue a declaration which formally ended the Protectorate and declared Egypt an independent country, subject to four 'reserved points'. These were the security of British Empire communications, the defence of Egypt against all foreign aggression, the protection of foreign interests and minorities, and the Sudan. In March, Sultan Fuad was proclaimed King of Egypt and a commission was appointed to draft a constitution. This, based mainly on the Belgian Constitution and in no way suitable for Egypt, where illiteracy was still about ninety-five per cent. and parliamentary democracy just meaningless words, was promulgated in April 1923; and elections, in which the Wafd, then, as now, the only large-scale political party in Egypt, won a clear victory, were held

the following year. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald invited Zaghlul Pasha to London for fresh negotiations, but these failed in face of what even a Labour Government considered the Wafd's 'outrageous demands'. There was a renewal of rioting when Zaghlul Pasha returned to Cairo, and a few days later Sir Lee Stack, Governor-General of the Sudan and Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, was shot dead in a Cairo street. Lord Allenby presented an ultimatum to the Egyptian Government demanding, amongst other redress, a fine of £500,000, the suppression of all demonstrations, the withdrawal from the Sudan of all Egyptian officers and purely Egyptian units, and a notification to the Sudan Government that the area to be irrigated in the Gezira would be increased from 300,000 feddans to an unlimited figure. This final demand gave rise to Egyptian fears, never since entirely dispelled, that the British or the Sudanese might on some future occasion threaten Egypt's very existence by tampering with the waters of the Nile.

Zaghlul Pasha resigned and Parliament was suspended. Two years later he died and was succeeded as leader of the Wafd by Mustapha el Nahas Pasha. By this time Egypt had settled down a little; and although there were occasional spurts of disorder, the violence of the immediate pre-war years was not repeated until the years following the next war. From 1927 until 1936 a three-cornered struggle for power developed in Egypt, as the Palace took an increasingly active part in the country's affairs and King Fuad was extremely clever in playing off the Wafd against the British. There were several more unsuccessful attempts to negotiate an Anglo-Egyptian treaty, usually by one of the many minority governments which, with British backing, ruled the country in the intervals when the Wafd, having regained power, were dismissed from office by the King, who had become their bitter enemy. By 1935 there was a distinct change of mood inside Egypt, where the imperialistic tendencies of Italy, manifested both in North and East Africa, aroused open alarm. This resulted in the formation of a United Front of all the country's leading politicians under Mustapha el Nahas Pasha and a request that Anglo-Egyptian negotiations should be reopened. These began in March 1936, and five months later the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Alliance was signed—the instrument unilaterally abrogated by Egypt in October 1951.

The Treaty ended the British military occupation of Egypt, but laid down that after the evacuation of British troops from Cairo and Alexandria 'until such time as the High Contracting Parties agree that the Egyptian Army is in a position to ensure by its own resources the liberty and entire security of navigation of the Suez Canal' Britain would be authorized to station in the vicinity of the Canal land forces, limited to 10,000, and an air force of 400 pilots, 'together with the necessary ancillary personnel for administration and technical duties. These numbers do not include civilian personnel, e.g. clerks, artisans, and labourers.' As regards the Sudan, which has remained a point of serious dispute between the two countries, the Treaty provided that its administration should continue to be 'that resulting from the Condominium agreement of 1899', but that both parties agreed that 'the primary aim of their administration in the Sudan must be the welfare of the Sudanese.' Nothing in the Treaty 'prejudices the question of sovereignty over the Sudan.'

A year later the capitulations and the consular courts were abolished, and Egypt, sponsored by Britain, was admitted to membership of the League of Nations.

The term of the Treaty was twenty years, but negotiations for its revision could be entered into 'with the consent of the High Contracting Parties' after a period of ten years.

Three years later the outbreak of war both prevented the full implementation of the Treaty, in that certain British personnel and British controls were retained, and put it to its first test, which it passed smoothly. King Farouk, who had succeeded his father in 1936, refused to have a Wafdist government until, after a succession of minority Cabinets, Britain stepped in, rather harshly, and imposed Mustapha el Nahas Pasha upon him. The Egyptians behaved surprisingly well during the war years, despite their obvious dislike of the presence of over one million Allied soldiers in their country, even when the Germans were practically at their door and experienced observers felt that an anti-British movement was likely.

IRAQ AND SYRIA

There was even deeper discontent in Iraq in 1918 than there was in Egypt, for the Iraqi, having by his own efforts, he felt, shaken off the Turkish yoke and assisted in winning the war, believed that the

time for full independence had arrived. Soon after the Amir Faisal, expelled from Damascus by the French, arrived in Baghdad, there was a serious insurrection in the Lower Euphrates area which took large British forces to put down. Faisal was crowned king in August 1921 and at once set about drafting a constitution and a treaty to regulate Iraq's relations with England. Eventually, after two previous agreements had shown grave weaknesses, a new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty was concluded in 1930 whereby Iraq was admitted to full membership of the League of Nations as a sovereign, independent state and her relationship with Britain was defined as a military alliance. The only important military clause, however, was that which permitted two British air bases to be retained on Iraqi territory. Provisions were made for mutual assistance in time of war or threat of imminent war and for providing on Iraqi territory facilities such as ports, aerodromes, railways, etc. An Anglo-Iraqi Financial Agreement was negotiated at the same time. This transferred to Iraq the railway system, the aerodromes, and part of the port of Basra, while a Judicial Agreement signed the following year provided for the abolition of capitulations and established a common system of justice for Iraqis and foreigners.

Despite the achievement of an independence which was lightly fettered, if indeed fettered at all, unrest continued to boil up from time to time. As the later chapter on Iraq will show, one of the prime causes of trouble was the Kurdish minority. Another was the army, which was responsible for a *coup d'état* in 1936 and an even more serious uprising in 1941—the Rashid Ali al Kilaini revolt. In between there was constant tribal trouble and a series of political disturbances of a more minor character. It is surprising that with this considerable if sporadic trouble, Iraq between the two wars made great progress, and at least some of the credit must go to the small band of British officials whose services were willingly retained by independent Iraq.

SYRIA AND THE LEBANON

The portion of the Middle East which came under French mandate—because of France's 'special interest in the Levant States' and also to balance British influence in the Eastern Mediterranean—was quickly split up into two main states, the Lebanon and Syria. The state of Greater Lebanon contained a small Christian majority and

was never so hostile to French administration as was Moslem Syria. Here the French authorities set up the Territory of the Alawis round Latakia, the Jebel Druze, and, inside what remained Syria, the provinces of Damascus and Aleppo, the latter containing the Sanjak of Alexandretta. This extension of the 'divide and rule' principle enabled the French authorities to favour and try to obtain the support of the various minorities in Syria. The plan worked to some extent, but it did not lessen the general hostility with which the Mandatory was regarded, a hostility sufficiently strong to obscure the quite considerable material benefits a French administration brought to the territory. Drastic measures taken by the French to put down insurrections—they bombarded Damascus in 1925 and reduced part of the city to ruins—did nothing to lessen the hatred felt for them by the entire Moslem population and a part of the Christians and other minorities. When M. Leon Blum was in office in France in 1936 a Franco-Syrian treaty was negotiated but never ratified by the French Chamber. It provided for the transfer of authority to the Syrian Government and the entry of Syria into the League of Nations. The Alawi and Jebel Druze districts were to be reincorporated in Syria; and a military alliance between Syria and France, on much the same lines as the Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi treaties, would have given France the right to maintain troops and bases in Syria. A similar treaty was concluded with the Lebanon—and met a similar fate. Relations with France continued to deteriorate, and the cession by France to Turkey in 1939 of the northern Syrian district of Alexandretta, in contravention, it was argued, of the terms of the Mandate, might have had more serious results had it not been for the approaching war. During the first two years of the war Syria and the Lebanon were controlled by the Vichy Government, but in June 1941 they were occupied by an Allied force, and the Free French authorities took over the administration.

This short, highly condensed and over-simplified historical survey of the steps which led to the foundation of the Middle East as it is now, introduces this book of which the purpose is to discuss the Middle East from the end of the second world war until the present time.

PART I

THE BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II

WHEN hostilities came to an end the Middle East presented an air of tremendous, superficial prosperity to the casual visitor. It had done extremely well out of the war and suffered from it nothing more serious than a shortage of imported consumer goods and the presence on its soil of bitterly disliked foreign armies. In the space of six years (1940-1946) well over one million Allied troops had lived in the Middle East and fought along its fringes. The bulk of their equipment and rations had been specially imported, but their local spending in that time had been enormous. Local contractors had made impressive fortunes by constructing roads and landing-grounds, barracks, and bridges; by providing fresh fruit and vegetables and other items to supplement the imported rations; by manufacturing anything from aspirin to leather hand-bags to save space on Allied shipping. Hotels, cafés, restaurants, cinemas, night-clubs—all had known an unparalleled prosperity. Although the major portion of all this vast flow of money went into the pockets of the few—another outstanding characteristic of the entire Middle East—sufficient of it did slip through greedy, grasping fingers to bring about a slight improvement in the standards of living and, anyway, the presence of these Allied armies and all their auxiliary and ancillary services did ensure regular, well-paid employment for hundreds of thousands of Arabs who had never before known such a phenomenon. There was, of course, a sharp rise in the cost of living. The Allied authorities did all they could to check this, but their efforts were uniformly nullified by pressure upon the local governments from what is called 'the Pasha class'—the unscrupulous, conscienceless tiny minority of wealthy men who were, and are, all-powerful in their respective countries. This is particularly true of Egypt, which was the main

Allied base in the Middle East. The common man, and his wife, frittered away their war profits on luxuries they had never before dreamed of possessing, and practically everything that could be procured, either legitimately or by obtaining 'under-the-counter' import licences (not difficult, but the scale of bribes rose steeply), or by theft from Allied dumps, was sold for fantastic prices. Motor-tyres fetched hundreds of pounds; nylon stockings sold as fast as they could be obtained for ten pounds and more a pair; fountain-pens, frequently bought by people who could not write, and watches for people who could not tell the time, cost anything from twenty pounds to fifty pounds each. As the war moved away from the Middle East there was more shipping space available for civilian goods, and by VE Day the shops of Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, and even the open-fronted stores of Amman were bulging with a mass of unusual and, for the majority of people who bought them so eagerly, mostly useless articles. The really rich—and therefore really powerful—classes had increased their wealth so fabulously that they could not possibly spend more than a fraction of it and by legal or illegal means had managed to build up large bank balances in America, Switzerland, France and elsewhere, to be disposed of profitably when controls were lifted.

The prosperity was superficial, because anyone who cared to look beneath the surface quickly found evidence of the same crushing poverty which has always marked the Moslem countries. In Cairo, the capital and certainly the largest and richest city of the Arab world, ragged men, women, and children still slept in the streets: they had nowhere else to go. The slums were as wide-spread, as odoriferous, as fly-infested as ever, but somewhat more crowded. Squalid, crumbling, filthy mud-brick buildings faced each other across narrow alleys through which even a loaded donkey could not pass. These hovels had no running water, and such amenities as bathrooms or lavatories had never been heard of. Semi-naked children nursing naked babies whose eyes could not be seen for the cluster of flies screamed for *bakshish* the moment a foreigner appeared, and beggars displaying horrifying sores and infirmities whined for alms. All this was within a few minutes' walk of the broad streets of the modern city, the big hotels, luxurious residential quarters and the expensive shops. Cairo is indeed still more than half slum, and no Egyptian

Government, despite high-sounding promises, has ever devoted a moment's attention or a piastre of public money to doing anything about it.

Conditions in the immediate post-war period were worse than usual, for there had been a steady drift to the towns by young men who imagined life would be easier in the big cities. Whether or not they found work there, nothing would make them return to the countryside where, although living conditions were possibly even worse, there was an easy friendship and hospitality which ensured that they would at least not go hungry. How they lived in Cairo is not easy to say unless they were fortunate enough to find employment, and those who did obtain wartime jobs were out of work when the troops departed. But the fascination of the city, the shops, lights, people, cinemas, were all powerful inducements, and all the large Middle Eastern cities have had their populations swelled by this influx from the provinces.

It is the presence of these crowds of unemployed youths in the large cities, most particularly in Cairo and Alexandria but to a lesser extent in Baghdad and Damascus, that has made the 'mob rule' which was always a feature of Middle Eastern life, so infinitely more serious since the war, and since, indeed, all foreign authority has disappeared. They can be bought for insignificant sums to create demonstrations or disorders, but payment is rarely necessary, for any kind of disturbance is at once an excitement adding a little spice to a normally dull life, and an opportunity for loot. These mobs, whose natural leaders are not directly the politicians themselves but the students, who are regarded by many politician Arabs as their 'armies', are, however, becoming as serious a menace to their own countries as they are to the foreigners who still live in them. They are the gathering-point of all dissatisfaction and the malleable tools of agitators of all kinds; they could quite easily riot for the Ikhwan al Musalameen (Moslem Brotherhood) one day, the Communists the next, and the local Fascist Party the day after. They can still be stirred up against any particular country or sect by any demagogic politician whose object will certainly be to distract their and the country's attention from his own deficiencies, but there are signs that they in their turn are beginning, just by their growing strength and violence, to bring pressure to bear on governments.

Arab political leaders, however, had every reason to be well satisfied with their wartime efforts. They all kept their respective countries out of the conflict until the war was well on the way to being won and there was no longer any possible chance that they would have to do their share of the fighting. Allied armies paid excessively heavily for the privilege of protecting the Middle East when there was a serious danger that it would be overrun by Hitler and Mussolini. On top of those delightful twin facts of immunity and profit, the Arab countries expected definite advantages after the war for being good during it: in other words, for their share in providing the Allied forces with the 'tranquil bases' which were so important they expected that the last feeble restraints on their independence would later be lifted. The primary demand was that all foreign troops should evacuate the Middle East. The Fascist threat had been removed and that of Communism had not arisen in sufficient clearness for the Arabs to perceive its danger. What point was there in maintaining foreign garrisons? Egypt and Iraq, the countries most concerned, were heartened by the leading part Britain had taken in obtaining for Syria and the Lebanon their independence from the French. In parenthesis, in all these anti-foreign manoeuvrings and bickerings Jordan, or as it was still, Transjordan, under the wise leadership of the Emir Abdullah stood aloof: but even Jordan got itself elevated from a country under mandate to an independent kingdom, and the Emir Abdullah became a king. As a precautionary measure, and also because the setting up of 'blocs' had become fashionable, Arab politicians, under the leadership of Egypt's Mustapha el Nahas Pasha and Iraq's General Nuri es Said, had busied themselves during the war, when 'struggling' against the British and other imperialists was impossible, with the formation of an Arab League which, in theory, would unite the Arab countries for their economic, cultural and social good, as well as proving combined defence forces and other means of mutual support. The League had received the formal blessing of Mr. Anthony Eden, then Britain's Foreign Secretary, and later of Mr. Winston Churchill himself. All the omens appeared good—or almost all.

A minor shadow was thrown across Middle East complacency by some uncertainty about the situation of Syria and the Lebanon, where, it was sometimes felt in the immediate post-war period,

Britain was attempting to replace the French whose régime they had helped to bring to an end. This was, however, shown to be untrue. There were, further, more serious doubts about the Emir Abdullah, whose pet scheme for the creation of Greater Syria was believed to be well regarded by the British Government. The scheme was simple and had a great deal to commend it. In short, it was for the fusion into one large state of the three or four small countries—Syria, Iraq, Transjordan, and possibly the Lebanon—which had been created after World War I from the old Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire. The trouble was that the Emir Abdullah would naturally expect to be king of Greater Syria, with Damascus as his capital; and this would mean that the then leaders of Syria would be out of favour and jobs, and so would a good many officials of the separate countries. Divorced from such personal considerations the plan, which would have done on a smaller scale what the Arab League was intended to do, but has not even begun to achieve, for all the Arab states, was eminently sensible. It would have meant an end to the frontiers, passports, customs, different currencies, and all the artificial barriers which had been erected, not by the Arabs themselves but by the Big Powers, to complicate the life of several millions of people belonging basically to the same race, however divided by hereditary tribal differences they might be. It would have meant in the place of three or four small, defenceless and barely viable states one large solid unit. It was this possibility that aroused strong opposition from Egypt, which saw its position as natural leader of the Arab countries threatened. Opposition also came from Saudi Arabia but on personal grounds: there was a lasting feud between King Ibn Saud and the Emir Abdullah.

This shadow passed, to reappear from time to time until, with the assassination of King Abdullah, it probably disappeared for ever. But another storm-cloud arose as hostilities ended which finally burst over the Middle East with such violence and so widespread and complete an exacerbation of Arab feelings that its influence has not passed and will probably never pass away: this was the Jewish problem in Palestine. Before the second world war, when the Palestine Arabs were in revolt against the Palestine Government on the question of Jewish immigration, there was a limited interest shown in these events by the other Arab countries: the problem was considered a local one

and no threat to the Middle East as a whole was seen in Jewish efforts to create a National Home in the Holy Land. The war changed that attitude, radically. Hitler's persecution of the Jews had not only enormously increased the rate of immigration into Palestine, but it had clearly consolidated the Zionists' determination to build up a Jewish State in Palestine. As world sympathy for the luckless refugees and victims of Nazi persecution was overpoweringly strong in 1946 it became apparent to many Arab leaders that a crisis would sooner or later arise in Palestine. They saw, too, that Britain, as Mandatory Power, and America, as the main supporter of Zionism, would be on the side of the Jews. There was certainly no full realization of the seriousness of the situation the Arab countries would have to face, but the cloud was there. As a slight foretaste of what was to happen, Jewish terrorists had penetrated to Cairo there to murder the British Minister Resident, Lord Moyne. In an effort to find a solution to the problem of Jewish refugees which would not throw the entire burden upon Palestine, Abdel Rahman Azzam Pasha, the newly appointed Secretary-General of the Arab League, suggested that all the member countries of the United Nations should agree to take a proportion of the stateless Jews; the Arab countries, including Palestine, would readily do their part, but they did not see why only Palestine should be called upon to open its doors to people who were, after all, alien to the Arab Middle East.

It is because the Israelis are mostly aliens in the Middle East that Israel should not enter into the scheme of a book about Arab Middle East, despite the fact that it constitutes the most important single problem in the area. The impact of this new country, these new people, on every Arab country is so great, however, that indirectly Israel comes into a discussion of every aspect of Middle Eastern affairs. The formation of Israel and the steps which led up to it are fully described in the chapter on Palestine.

There was another development in the Middle East as the war came to an end, which increased the importance of the area. It was the discovery that in the Middle East and Persian Gulf areas lay the world's largest petroleum deposits. This was important, for various reasons, to Middle East economy as a whole, despite the fact that the oilfields tended to be on the outer edge of the region and of immediate benefit only to Iraq, of the Arab countries proper, Persia

and the Gulf sheikhdoms. The world's consumption of petroleum products had increased enormously and would go on increasing, and new sources of supply were urgently needed. Although oil was mined only on the fringes of the Middle East, a vast system of pipelines was planned to carry it to ports and refineries in countries nearer to the Mediterranean and Europe, so that, it was then imagined, the wealth it brought in would gradually permeate through the Arab world as a whole. In addition, the petroleum industry offered well-paid jobs to skilled and unskilled men from even those countries not actually fortunate enough to have deposits of their own. There were also the international implications to be considered ; the majority of the new petroleum companies and their offshoots were American, and this meant an awakening of American interest in a part of the world which it had almost entirely ignored before the war. Whether or not this was in itself a good thing, few Arab politicians troubled at that time to consider. What it meant was surely an opportunity for fresh exercises in the game at which the Arabs had become so adept : playing off one power against another. French influence, except on cultural levels, had disappeared, but America had come along to prevent the British having matters all their own way. There was also the belief—which turned out to be entirely mistaken—by those few politicians who were capable of looking ahead, that this positive American interest in the Middle East would make the United States less inclined to support Zionism. Finally, as hope springs eternal in the Arab breast, those unfortunate countries in which petroleum had not yet been discovered confidently believed that it was there and would one day come to the surface, as it were. This enabled them with true Arab optimism to write off large deficits in their annual budgets against ' future oil royalties '.

Another post-war development which affected the Middle East was the immense expansion of air traffic and the importance of this area as a junction. Wartime landing-grounds built by the Allied forces were expanded, renovated and put into commission as full-blown aerodromes, and each country had a feeder service of its own to join up with the international air lines which made increasing use of Middle Eastern facilities.

The rapid spread of Communism in the wake of the victorious Russian armies and the emergence of Russia as one of the Great

Powers had made little impression on the Arab leaders ; nor were they, at the time, unduly worried by the steady stream of Communist propaganda which was already being directed towards the Middle East. An area where the extremes of great ostentatious wealth and really degrading poverty are perhaps more apparent than anywhere else in the world is an obvious breeding-ground for Communism, and unless something is done to improve the abysmally wretched way of life of nine-tenths of the population, sooner or later a revolution will come. But in the immediate post-war years the Arab leaders foresaw no trouble from that source. The mass of people were too wretched, too down-trodden and too leaderless to revolt, and there was a satisfying theory that the Moslem religion, which, with all its faults, is an active, living religion with an immensely strong hold on all its adherents, would prove a barrier to the spread of the destructive anti-religious tenets of Communism. Some Arab leaders made great play with the theory that Communism is implicit in Islam, for the strict Koranic code implies a certain sharing of wealth and imposes upon the tribal sheikh or other leader the obligation to see that all his followers are fed, sheltered and protected. They forget that, in general, the rich, powerful men of the Middle East, and particularly of Egypt and the more advanced countries, observe the outward trappings of the Islamic faith, but disregard its teachings and its spirit. However, Communism was declared illegal and known Communists were imprisoned. But the Russians had during the war opened large legations in Beirut and in Cairo, and both were fully employed in disseminating Communist propaganda ; and nothing was done, or even could be done, about it.

The Middle East governments, without exception, had a wonderful, providential scapegoat to take the blame for all their manifold deficiencies : for every ill that befell their countries, the foreigner was to blame. They could still deflect popular dissatisfaction by announcing their determination to rid their countries of the foreign elements which were preventing the fulfilment of their 'national aspirations'. This simple scheme was unfailingly successful and timely shouts of 'Down with the British' repeatedly forestalled cries of 'Down with the Government'. In countries where the British had never been in control and where French authority had disappeared, it was possible to blame present ills on past foreign sins. There was one

cardinal principle : nothing was ever the fault of the Arab leaders themselves.

But in the years between the second world war and the present day two new factors have entirely changed the tempo of political life and political feeling in the Middle East : they are the emergence of the state of Israel and the determination of a fully independent Egypt to assume the position, rights, and privileges but not necessarily the responsibility or the responsibilities of a Great Power. This has altered the political situation and, to some extent, the military position, but it has made no difference to social conditions : the Middle East to-day is still a Paradise for Pashas and hell for everyone else.

Social, economic and political conditions vary quite considerably in the seven states of the Arab Middle East, but fundamentally the outlook, the philosophy of life, in all of them, from semi-educated Egypt to completely illiterate Yemen, is much the same. This is because, basically, they have a common heritage—the heritage of Islam.

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF ARAB STATES

THE vast majority of Arabs are Moslems. They are fatalists who believe that 'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet'. Whatever may happen, be it good or bad, is 'the will of Allah'. Thus the good Moslem accepts droughts or floods, endures poverty, pain, and dirt largely because 'Allah wills it'.

It is generally considered to be bad form to criticize the chosen creed of a people, but it is impossible to study the problems of the Middle East without an understanding of some of the merits and also the disadvantages of Islam. Not only is Allah worshipped in the mosques on Friday, but the lives of Moslems are regulated by the Shariah Law, which has a wider application than any Western secular law and which is based on the teachings of Mohammed expressed in the Koran. The civil law is, in every case, based on the tenets of Islam. Thus any Arab may have four wives as decreed by the Prophet, in addition to numerous concubines, and he may without effort divorce any one of his wives.

Although the state law does not in all cases enforce religious observance, a good Moslem may not drink alcohol, nor is he allowed to eat shell-fish or pork. During one month of the year—Ramadan—he must fast from dawn to sunset. In addition, every Moslem must be circumcised, say his prayers five times a day, and wash his hands and feet before going into a mosque. There is much that is valuable and sensible in his religion, whose customs and laws have a great deal in common with the customs of other Semitic tribes, notably the Jews. Obviously in the hot desert it was unwise for the nomad to eat pork, offal, or shell-fish. The month of fasting was healthy; the ablutions before prayer a necessity; and amongst warlike tribes where death in battle was more common even than death from sickness, famine, or disease, polygamy was a practical institution which produced plenty of children and ensured a sufficiency of manpower for the tribe or township to defend its grazing area and prevent any rival tribe from attempting to wipe them out by massacre.

In fact, much of the justification for this has decreased, because, since Mohammed dictated the Koran at the beginning of the seventh century, there has been a consistent movement, slow at times, towards settlement in towns and villages, which has gradually decreased the amount of tribal warfare. During the last century there has been an improvement in medical services, with the result that the infant-mortality rate, though still high on European standards, has dropped.

It is difficult to assess the full influence of religion on all classes of society in the Middle East to-day. As a rough generalization it may fairly be said to have least influence amongst the groups in large cities and towns which have established contact with the West. The more remote the community, the more deeply religious it is likely to be. It is reasonable to compare the attitude towards religion of the post-war youth in, say, Cairo with his contemporaries in Worcester or Derby and contrast them with their mosque-, church- or chapel-going grandparents. Here the comparison with English life must end, because there is no section of the community in the British Isles which takes its religion as seriously, which accepts its doctrines as completely and as unquestioningly, as the Moslem of the deep countryside. It is interesting, however, to note that Soviet-inspired broadcasts in Arabic are now attempting to influence these religious Moslems. The Russians claim they are successful.

The gradual breakaway from the strict Islamic life, the unveiling of women and their participation in social life, the adoption of Western habits in questions of food and drink and dress have not unnaturally caused periodic and violent reactionary religious movements, and it is difficult (if not impossible) to separate the religious from the nationalistic, so deeply identified is Islam with the State.

Not only have all the Arab States a common religion, but they also have a common language. Classical Arabic, the language of the Koran and of the scholar, to-day is compulsory for all politicians and lawyers. The colloquial language that is spoken throughout the Middle East does naturally vary enormously, but still there is little difficulty in the Moroccan from Rabat, the Syrian from Damascus, and the Iraqi from Basra all talking together over their coffee in a Cairo café. If an Arab is fortunate enough to be able to read, he can read a newspaper, whether it be published in Cairo, Fez, or Jidda, but the Press is fast dropping the classical language and becoming

increasingly colloquial. It is fair to say that the Syrian in Cairo is immediately recognized as a foreigner : he may feel, as a Highlander in London, at one and the same time a foreigner and a native, especially if he meets a real foreigner—a European or an American. Many Arabs from North Africa, and Syrians living in Cairo, are at pains to explain to Europeans that, owing to the advantages of a common language, they feel at home.

As well as having a common religion and language, the Arabs of the Middle East, apart from Central and Southern Arabia, were all conquered by the Ottoman Turks. For over four hundred years the Turks ruled the countries that to-day form the Arab League. Constantinople employed the same methods to govern Asia and Africa as were used in subjecting the Christian peoples of the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

The Sultan sent important Pashas to each province. Their task was to ensure that the area was tranquil and that sufficient taxes were collected from the native population to satisfy an excessively greedy Court in Constantinople, as well as to pay for the maintenance of law and order on the spot and, lastly, to enable the Pasha concerned to make his own fortune to prepare for the day when he would be deposed and have to return to Turkey.

The only way to advance under Turkish rule was to adopt the ways of the Porte. The Arabs began with a certain advantage in that they were already Moslems and shared a common religion with their rulers. The ambitious learnt Turkish, studied in Constantinople and entered politics, the administration, or the Army. The middle-aged in Arab politics to-day still speak Turkish—the late King Abdullah, Nuri es Said Pasha (Premier of Iraq), Azzam Pasha (Secretary-General of the Arab League) amongst others.

The long Turkish domination has, however, left little permanent mark on an area which, until the second and third decades of this century, has rarely been without a foreign overlordship. Much is made of the Turkish heritage of corruption, but while it is certainly true that Ottoman rule, particularly in the days of its decline, did set a sorry example not only of dishonesty but also of inefficiency, an examination of the Arab character might well suggest that many of the present-day defects are inherent rather than inherited. Further, from the time roughly in the middle of the last century when the

Middle East generally, and Egypt in particular, became the prey of European adventurers and fortune-hunters, new depths of public and private corruption were established. With their capitals filled with smooth-speaking but utterly dishonest and unscrupulous 'gentlemen-adventurers' and their seaports cluttered up with the scum of the Mediterranean ports, what chance had the fairly simple-minded Arab of charting a course of honesty and integrity? It is, however, a striking fact that for many years after the end of Ottoman rule the outstanding men in the Arab countries—in which Egypt is included more for convenience than on strict racial grounds—were of Turkish blood, either through the intermarriage of Turkish administrators and soldiers with the indigenous inhabitants, or by Turks proper who had decided to renounce their Turkish nationality and settle in the Middle East.

One curious habit shared by the Turkish 'master-race' and the so often enslaved Arab or Egyptian is the disinclination to give frank and truthful answers to questions. A kind of mistaken politeness may have something to do with this, but it is a fact that nine times out of ten an Arab's reply will be not what he thinks but what he believes the questioner would like him to think. A very misleading practice, responsible for all kinds of curious fallacies about the mysterious Middle East.

There are other and more important directions in which the Turkish heritage was not a happy one and has had disastrous consequences in Turkish-dominated Europe as well as in Asia. The methods of Turkish rule effectively prevented both political development and the spread of education. The Turks built railways for economic and strategic reasons, they caused telephones to be installed, harbours and bridges constructed, and roads cut through the centre of towns and villages, whilst education was deliberately discouraged and progressive ideas suppressed. The peasant in Roumania and Syria saw a railway line built in the nineteenth century, but beyond witnessing this miracle his ideas remained uncontaminated by the forces of progress which were at work in Western Europe. He lived, though, and worked as his ancestor four hundred years earlier, attending the same services at church or mosque.

The peasants throughout the Ottoman Empire, whether Christian or Moslem, tribal or settled, kept alive their folk-lore, which consisted

almost entirely of accounts of the heroic deeds of national heroes—in fact, the exploits of men who had been kings and fighting men before the Turkish conquest. But repetition of these legends was not inspired by the forces of nationalism which had been unleashed in Western Europe by the French Revolution. Nationalism was, however, revived in Egypt by an Albanian soldier of the Porte, Mohammed Ali Pasha, whose dream was, first, to set himself up as ruler of an independent Egypt, and then to create an Arab Empire out of the Sultan's dominions. Mohammed Ali, 'the founder of Modern Egypt', achieved the first part of his objective, and very nearly succeeded in the second. Egyptians now claim that the failure was due almost entirely to Palmerston's opposition. For with the conquest of Syria in 1832 Mohammed Ali's dream was nearly a reality. Had the Syrians been influenced by the nationalist teachings of liberal university professors and poets who did so much to speed revolutionary ideas in nineteenth-century Europe, and had Mohammed Ali then made full use of Arabic lore and appealed to Syrian 'Arabism', he might well have retained his empire despite British opposition and the fighting forces of the Sultan. The false start of Arab Nationalism did give considerable encouragement to the European subjects of the Porte who were in close touch with Western Europe. Greece, Roumania, Serbia, and Bulgaria all gradually achieved their independence of Constantinople. They all faced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the political problems which bedevil Arab politicians to-day, although the Arabs have only become truly independent since the end of World War I. Many of the problems and difficulties arise from the fact that the new states adopted ready-made constitutions which were entirely unsuited to the mentality and talents of peoples who had lived for centuries under Ottoman domination. Apparently, as the former subjects of the Porte possessed railways and telegraph lines, their leaders and Western advisers thought they needed a modern constitution to match. No one paused to think how long the democratic systems of England and France had taken to develop. Democracy was the universal cry, and peasants, however illiterate, were given the power to elect politicians who themselves had neither experience in government nor talent for administration.

A brief study of any one Balkan country over any period since

their independence was achieved will fully illustrate this point. The king, president or prime minister set himself up as a benevolent dictator, if he had the power, after the country had struggled, without success, to make the parliamentary system work. On the whole, the dictatorship did achieve internal security, at the price of the suppression of intellectual liberty, which was naturally only noticed by the educated minority who had lived or studied in Western Europe. The Press was controlled and censorship was imposed, whilst movement in and out of the country was strictly supervised and passports were only available to 'loyal' subjects. The dictators never for a moment admitted their role. They built up insubstantial political parties which were to a considerable extent inspired by the Nazi Party in Germany and the Fascists in Italy. These parties guaranteed plenty of cheer leaders for all parades and provided a minor loyalty test for the individual. No state posts could ever be obtained by non-Party members, however humble the post might be. Few people, however, with the exception of the leaders of the present Communist governments in the Balkan States, ever found themselves in prison for their political views. The stress of the dictatorship varied, but whether the régime of the playboy king in Roumania was more or less liberal than that of General Metaxas in Greece or King Zog in Albania, their essential forms of government were similar.

The comparison of the Balkan States between the two wars with the Middle East to-day has a certain value because of the similarity of forms of government and personalities which the two groups of former Ottoman-ruled states have thrown up. There are unhappily fewer educated and moderate leaders in the Middle East than there were in the pre-war Balkan States. It is fair to state that no true Arab liberal exists with a party of, say, more than a hundred members behind him. There are, too, in the Arab Middle East to-day, fewer political parties based on British, American or French patterns than in the pre-war Balkan area, and their form—with the obvious exceptions of the Communist Party and extreme Nationalists and the Moslem Brotherhood—varies greatly from state to state. There is some form of dictatorship in every country. It is a difficult, risky business for a man publicly to express strong contrary views to those of the Government or Chief of State without in some way 'paying for' his indiscretion socially or economically. Naturally, when

feeling is deeply aroused, more people do dare to be openly critical, but outside the organisation of the Communist Party few men care to put their critical views in writing.

In every Middle Eastern country the former wartime allies are fighting each other for influence : Great Britain and the United States are bitter commercial rivals, while the Soviet Union is steadily pursuing its own single-minded political aims. France, who, as a result of the war and, she resolutely believes, British intrigue, lost her position and most of her influence in the area, sits back and enjoys Britain's present difficulties, pointing out from time to time that many of them could have been avoided ' had the Western nations presented a united front '. The Middle Eastern countries themselves, although joined together by membership in the Arab League, are basically far from united, although they normally tend to present a façade of unity against the West and particularly against that dangerous trouble-making newcomer—Israel. There is at times a tendency to try to bring back to the Middle Eastern fold the one-time ruler of the whole region, Turkey ; and in the long run an agreement between the Arab States and the successor to the old Ottoman kingdom seems possible, although the more advanced, tougher, and, on the whole, more realistic Turks, dangerously near to the Russian threat, are more inclined to look to the West than the (near) East for support.

There is no doubt, however, that the real nigger in the Middle Eastern woodpile is Israel, and as time goes by the prospect of any co-operation or even a peace treaty between Israel and the Arab countries becomes more remote. The presence of Israel in the heart of the Middle East makes all plans for joint defence extremely difficult. Israel prevents land communications between the Arab States and effectively divides the northern area of the Lebanon and Syria from Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. There is, indeed, every reason why the Arabs should achieve a settlement with Israel, but reason does not appeal to the Arabs, who all share the cheerful ability to cut off their noses to spite their faces : they are prepared to suffer every kind of inconvenience and loss, economic, financial, and political, so long as they can believe that the Israelis suffer with them. This curious trait is universal, but not so generally recognized by the West as it should be, because the average Westerner usually meets only educated English- or French-speaking Arabs, who are quite ready to admit to

them the stupidity of the Arab attitude and to agree that the reasonable thing to do would be to forget the bitternesses of the ' Palestine war ' and accept the fact that Israel has come to stay, and make the best of it. (A few Lebanese businessmen and the late King Abdullah would have liked to come to terms with the Israelis, but they were a tiny minority.) (Arab pride and touchiness is proverbial ; they are in many ways far more sensitive than other people and far less open to advice or criticism.) These characteristics are especially strong where their national independence is in question. In fact, the Arabs are like children—but there is nothing they dislike more than being told so.

The entire region suffers from acute shortage of water. Thus a large part of the Middle East is natural and barren desert. The rainfall, except in certain mountainous areas, is nil, or so low and seasonal that cultivation must depend entirely on irrigation from one of the great rivers which flow through the area, the sinking of artesian wells, or the careful preservation and storage of rainfall from nearby mountains. The proportion of productive land to desert (excluding Saudi Arabia, which is ninety-nine per cent. desert, and the Yemen, because there are no statistics) is small : just over six per cent. of the land is cultivated. The crops throughout the Middle East, with the exception of citrus (in the former mandated territory of Palestine) and cotton (in Egypt) are of extremely low yield when compared with Europe.

Doreen Warriner in *Land and Poverty in the Middle East* said :

' A low level of output per head is characteristic of *all* the countries, whatever the farming system. Thus the rapid increase of population, the low level of output per head, and the wasteful use of land all make it imperative to plan the agricultural development of the region, in order to increase yields per acre and per head, and improve the utilisation of land resources.'

The basic difficulty which stands in the way of any improvement is the power and the greed of the landowner. The kings, presidents and governments are all landowners who will not improve or plan for the benefit of the population, because they are not moved on idealistic grounds to attempt social amelioration. Nor are they, as yet, sufficiently frightened by the prospect that they will eventually lose their own power and riches unless the lot of the peasant be improved.

The complicated laws affecting the tenure of land, which were inherited from the Ottoman Empire, also help the landowner, who can afford better and more expensive lawyers than the illiterate and often stupid peasant. Nowhere throughout the region do the rich actually live in the countryside. They rarely visit their country estates for more than a few days each year. There is no Moslem equivalent of the Anglo-Saxon squire who lives amongst his tenants and, unless he be a bad character, cares for the welfare of the people on his estate. The wealthy Moslem of the Middle East loathes the countryside and loves the city. He regards his estates as a source of income, and the bigger the income the better. It is unusual to find a landlord who is willing to invest money in order to improve the land for his own long-term benefit. The Arab demands a quick return for money invested. He cares little how much he ruins the richness of the soil through over-cultivation, the use of cheap artificial manures, and inadequate draining. That the land will become 'sour' and useless to his children is of no great concern to most Arabs.

In every country of the Middle East there is a settled population living in towns and villages, and there are still nomadic tribes. Between these two extremes are to be found many stages of semi-nomadic existence. In Egypt there is but a small percentage of nomadic peoples; in Jordan the reverse is true. The policy of the Great Powers—Great Britain and France—who were primarily interested in the Middle East, was always to settle the nomadic peoples. The theory was that they would be far more easily governed in a settled rather than a wandering state. The Great Powers always feared fighting between tribes which they were unable to control or to judge who was in the right. They disliked tribes wandering between one country and another without passports or identity cards of any kind. It was comparatively easy for such tribes to harbour criminals, smuggle gold or currency, indulge in raids on villages or large-scale thefts from pipe-line stations, and the Mandatory Powers, for all these reasons, did all they could to encourage settlement and organize the seasonal migration of tribes. Elaborate maps were produced, plotting the routes of different tribes as they moved to fresh grazing-lands from season to season with their herds of camels, goats, and a few beautiful horses.

There has been, too, a small-scale natural tendency towards

settlement since the establishment of the petroleum industry during the past decade. Men could earn as much in a week—often more—from an oil company as they collected in a year with the tribe. Another and centuries-old natural movement has been for tribes to sow an area and build houses near the cultivated land. After the grain is harvested they move off, to return to the village and sow more grain during the next rainy season.

It is, however, significant that a strong independent anti-settlement sentiment still exists amongst many Beduin. In the spring and summer of 1951 over ten thousand Beduin are said to have crossed the desert frontier of the Negev from Israel to Jordan. The reason for the movement and for their firm refusal to return to Israel under any conditions was that the Tel-Aviv Government wished 'to settle' them. The more obvious reasons for Arabs to want to leave the Jewish state were of secondary consideration to these nomadic tribesmen.

The largest of the Middle East states is Egypt, whose population, slightly greater than that of the other six countries combined, is more settled, mainly because its geographical position prevents the wandering from country to country which is a feature of life in the rest of the Middle East. It is also, thanks to its unrivalled cotton crop, developed entirely by foreigners, by far the richest. The combination of size and wealth plus the presence during more than half a century of a very large foreign population has helped Egypt to become the most advanced Middle Eastern country and the self-styled and grudgingly acknowledged leader of the area.

CHAPTER III

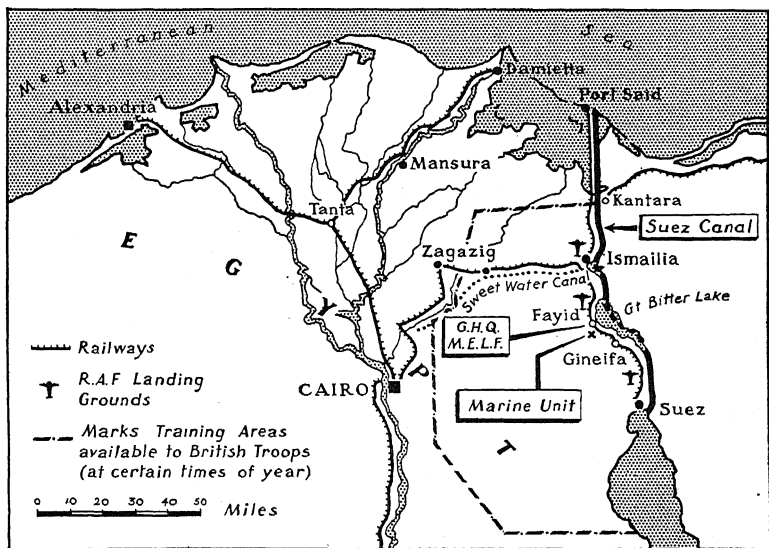
EGYPT

IF there is a constant factor in Egyptian politics, it is provided by the Palace,¹ for the King of Egypt, although his powers are limited by the constitution, is in practice the unquestioned ruler of the country. In the days between World War I and Egypt's full independence, King Fuad played off the other powers, the Wafd and the British, with consummate skill, and managed always to swing the balance of power back to the Palace. When Farouk came to the throne, an inexperienced youth, just as the 1936 Treaty gave Egypt unfettered independence, the politicians—and indeed the British too—imagined that the influence of the Palace would never again become predominant. But gradually the King reasserted his authority and it was not long before Farouk was an even more dominating factor in the country's political life than his father had been; his interference in everyday affairs became more open, if somewhat less intelligent, than King Fuad's had ever been.

Granted that it is a cardinal principle of British policy to support always those in power, it was a serious mistake not to foresee that King Farouk would be the power in the land, and not to take more trouble to guide and influence and, if possible, to win the friendship of the young monarch. As a boy, before his father's death, Farouk was probably prejudiced against the British by Ali Mahir Pasha, one of the cleverest but unfortunately most anti-British of Egyptian politicians, who was one of his first tutors, and who was later to become Chief of the Royal Cabinet. But Farouk's brief stay in England, interrupted by his father's death, seemed to have done something to overcome that youthful antagonism. Had he been able to remain in England for the proposed period and to complete his education there, the whole history of Anglo-Egyptian relations might have been different. As it was, the good a few months of life in England had accomplished was speedily undone by the treatment he received from the British Ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson (later Lord Killearn). Although he was a minor and unable officially to come to the throne,

¹ While the MS. of this book was with the printers, King Farouk was forced to abdicate and the Palace ceased abruptly and for ever to be the "constant factor in Egyptian politics" it had been since World War I. This, certainly the most surprising event in the history not only of Egypt but the entire Middle East, is discussed in the Epilogue.

Farouk was in practice King of Egypt, and it was inevitable that he should be courted, flattered and deferred to by all around him : it was just as inevitable that many of the people who surrounded him were worthless place- and fortune-hunters, a number of them foreign. Alone, the British Ambassador insisted on treating the King as a schoolboy, and, as time went by, a rather naughty schoolboy. Relations between the Palace and the British Embassy continued to



MAP II: THE CANAL ZONE OF EGYPT

deteriorate as the King's public and private behaviour became more indiscreet and as his hangers-on, with the great exception of Sir Ahmed Hasanein Pasha, became of more doubtful quality and a worse influence. By the outbreak of war a great opportunity had been irretrievably lost and what followed was almost inevitable : the now notorious events of 4th February 1942, always referred to by Egyptians as ' the incident of the tanks in Abdin Square ', placed their seal, probably for ever, on Anglo-Egyptian relations.

At this time Husain Sirri Pasha, one of the solid, respectable non-party Egyptian leaders who, in the days before the war were so often called upon to form anti-Wafdist minority governments, had been

dismissed from the Premiership after a disagreement with the King concerning the expulsion of the Vichy French Legation from Cairo. The critical situation in the Western Desert, where the Eighth Army were in grave danger of a decisive defeat, made a strong, popular government in Egypt a necessity. The King and his advisers dithered for days, seeking any alternative to Mustapha el Nahas Pasha, the Wafdist leader, as the next prime minister. The British urged that Nahas Pasha should be appointed on the grounds that in a national emergency which might conceivably arise, it was essential to have a government which enjoyed the backing of the majority of Egyptians. The King, who had summarily dismissed Nahas Pasha in 1937 and had been reported to have declared he would never have him back in office, demurred—strongly. He resisted all pressure and wished to appoint Ali Mahir Pasha, despite his known pro-Italian sympathies, to head a coalition government.

No doubt the rising anti-British feeling in the country, due to reverses in the Western Desert, the propaganda of the Moslem Brotherhood Organisation (Ikhwan al-Muslimin) and the failure of the Egyptian authorities to ensure a steady distribution of bread in Cairo, led the King to believe that any action he took which caused embarrassment to the Allies would have the full backing of the Egyptian people.

The British Government had little time to waste, and when it became apparent that King Farouk had no intention of giving way to British appeals, it became a military necessity for Egypt to have a stable government. Two light tanks escorted an armoured car which contained the British Ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson, Major-General R. G. W. H. Stone, General Officer Commanding British Troops in Egypt, and Major Burton, General Stone's A.D.C., to Abdin Palace. The Palace area was surrounded by British troops when the tanks drove past the Royal Guard at the Palace gate. The Ambassador was somewhat unceremoniously escorted into the King's presence. Here Sir Miles informed King Farouk that he must either abdicate or immediately invite Nahas Pasha to form a Government. The Ambassador had in his dispatch case a copy of the Instrument of Abdication, which had been earlier that day in the British Embassy laboriously translated from the one signed by Edward VIII into Arabic, with relevant Moslem additions and alterations.

Farouk hesitated, and asked the Ambassador what was the alternative. Sir Miles said: 'A destroyer is waiting in Suez, ready to take you to a safe place of exile!' Farouk then asked somewhat anxiously whether it would be the Seychelles (where Egyptian nationalist politicians had been imprisoned at the end of the last war). Loathing Nahas and the Wafd almost as much as he loathed the British, Farouk picked up his pen. From behind the King the famous Egyptian explorer Hasanein Pasha, who had been the King's tutor and was now Chief of the Royal Cabinet, stepped forward and put his hand on the King's arm, begging him to wait a few moments. That movement of Hasanein's changed the history of Egypt. King Farouk did not abdicate. He agreed to the British terms. Nahas Pasha was called to form a Government as the tanks rolled away from Abdin Square, carrying the British Ambassador with them.

From a military point of view the British Ambassador's action was fully justified by events. Nahas Pasha, ably assisted by Sir Miles himself, maintained a tranquil Egypt throughout the war. But on a long-term basis there is a strong case to be made against the action taken by the British Ambassador, which, of course, had the full support of Mr. Winston Churchill. King Farouk should either have been made to abdicate or not have been offended as grievously and deeply as he was by this incident, which he will never forgive nor forget. King Farouk rarely talks to Europeans or Americans for more than a few moments without reminding them of the indignities he suffered from the British Ambassador that February evening. The world knew nothing of the incident at the time, as the Anglo-Egyptian censorship strictly forbade any reference to the episode either in newspapers or by radio, and it was impossible for any correspondent to publish material which had not been authorized by the censorship.

Mustapha el Nahas Pasha, another permanent feature of Egyptian political life, had, on his side, no love for the King. The Wafdist Party, the only political party in Egypt with a large, popular country-wide following and a proper secretariat and party organization, had developed from the Wafd (literally—'delegation') which, under the leadership of the great national hero Saad Zaghlul Pasha, had tried to go to England in November 1918 to claim independence. The Wafd had constantly been at loggerheads with the Palace and just

as King Fuad disliked Zaghlul Pasha, so did King Farouk abominate Nahas Pasha. Fundamentally, the dislike arose from jealousy—both the Palace and the Wafd wanted power—and it was heightened by a curious class feeling, for the Wafd and its leaders were of the people, not the upper classes who, loyal and subservient to the King, usually run the affairs of Middle Eastern countries. There was also, of course, a constitutional issue. The King of Egypt has the power to dismiss his Prime Minister and has availed himself of that right on many occasions. The Wafd, having thus suffered at the hands of the Palace, tried, when in power, to change the constitution to limit the royal powers: they were always thrown out before they could accomplish their design, but always threatened to do better next time.

Nahas Pasha has risen from the most humble origins. He was the child of a fellah (peasant) who through his abilities as a lawyer came to practise in Cairo, where he entered politics. There is little doubt that he does genuinely wish to improve the miserable lot of the fellah and promote social welfare in Egypt, but he has never been able to put his plans into effect. There has always been a great deal of apathy as well as downright opposition from amongst his supporters, though had he felt as strongly when in office as when in opposition, Nahas could have overcome many of the difficulties and forced his party to plan and give serious consideration to social reforms and then initiate them.

The haphazard reforms which have been carried out have not been successful owing to lack of forethought or nation-wide planning. Nahas Pasha, like King Farouk, has been surrounded by office-seeking politicians and by greedy and avaricious relatives. Although there is no doubt Nahas Pasha is personally honest, there is considerable doubt concerning the integrity of some of his relatives and supporters. It is, of course, noticeable, especially to his enemies in Egypt, that he, a poor boy, is now a great landowner and the proud possessor of highly valued *objets d'art*. They forget that outside his political activities Nahas Pasha was one of the best, most successful, and most highly paid of Egyptian barristers. Although an old and tired man, Nahas Pasha's value to the party as an orator and as a name remains. He can move an Egyptian crowd to tears or laughter within a few minutes, and although his speeches, if translated into English, make little sense

(they make little sense in Arabic to the educated Egyptian), they are just what the Egyptian peasant wants to hear. The fellaheen have endowed Nahas with the virtues of a deity and, when he moves round the countryside, invalids, cripples, lepers try to touch his clothes in the hope that their health may be restored to them. Vast numbers of party supporters touch Nahas's hands 'for luck'.

Whatever the defects of a Wafdist régime—and they are somewhat greater than those of less-popular régimes simply because of the type of man now attracted to the Wafd and for the obvious reason that there are far more supporters to be rewarded—Nahas Pasha performed a very great service to the Allied cause: he kept Egypt calm and friendly during the very period when most Englishmen who knew Egypt well expected the exact opposite. At the time of Alamein, when Italian women in Alexandria were icing cakes with Italian colours and tying their children's hair with Italian ribbons ready to greet Mussolini and his triumphant Fascists on their entry into Egypt, there was not the slightest suspicion of an uprising by the supposedly anti-British Egyptians, who continued to co-operate fully with the British.

It is fair here, I think, to pay a tribute also to Sir Miles Lampson, whose difficult task it was throughout the war to 'assure the British forces fighting in the desert a tranquil base in Egypt'. Criticised for certain of his actions, during this intensely difficult Alamein period Sir Miles was worth much more than his not-inconsiderable weight in gold. In the blackest of days he made it a practice to call daily on Nahas Pasha at the Presidency to give him the latest news. Then the Ambassador would allow himself to be interviewed by the waiting Egyptian journalists. Big, burly, radiating good humour, well-being, and above all confidence, he would describe the military situation in glowing terms—and such was his personality that he gave a little of his confidence to the somewhat timorous journalists. Nahas Pasha, also a large, cheerful man, would back up Sir Miles magnificently, and their daily little show was in no small degree responsible for the calmness with which Egypt accepted the difficult days of the autumn of 1942.

For the next two years Nahas Pasha retained the popularity of his own people and the confidence of Allied diplomatic and military leaders. But the internal administration gradually declined and

although its faults were obscured by the major preoccupations of the war, it gradually furnished his enemies, inspired all along by the Palace, with ammunition which was eventually used against him. In the meantime, he devoted a good deal of his attention to the early stages of the negotiations for the setting-up of the Arab League, an important step which has not yet, however, fulfilled its early promises. Nuri Pasha es Said, whose basic idea it was, was working on similar lines in Baghdad and Nahas Pasha was eventually able to call a conference of Arab leaders in Cairo which laid the foundations of the League. He delegated to Abdel Rahman Azzam Bey (later Pasha) the task of working out the details: no better appointment could have been made and it is the fault of personal and national jealousies of the component Arab countries that Azzam Bey's enthusiasm, ideals, and hard work have not yet produced greater results. The League was formally blessed by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden in the name of the British Government.

In 1942, however, an event occurred which had immediate repercussions on the internal political situation—although its long-term effects turned out to be far less important than at the time appeared likely. Nahas Pasha quarrelled with William Makram Ebeid Pasha, for long years his right-hand man and indeed the brains behind the Wafd. Makram Pasha, an Oxford-educated Copt (Egyptian Christian) who had been Minister of Finance and Secretary-General of the Wafd, could never rise above second-in-command owing to his religion, but he had been extremely powerful and his desertion of Nahas, following the earlier defection of two other of the old stalwarts, Nokrashi Pasha and Ahmed Mahir Pasha, seemed very seriously to weaken the Wafd. Inspired by his shrewd instinct for publicity, Makram selected as the grounds for his resignation his inability any longer to associate himself with a party and a government in which corruption and nepotism had become so rife. There was considerable quiet amusement at this statement, but the charges, which were levelled most particularly at the Prime Minister and his immediate entourage, were a godsend to the Palace and the aristocratic Pashas (if that is not a contradiction in terms) who would give—and do—anything to get rid of Nahas. Makram followed up his first salvo with a full broadside—the publication of a book devoted to ‘revelations’ of all the corrupt practices of Nahas, Mmc Nahas,

their friends and relations. This 'Black Book' was immediately banned by the Government and the full might of the Anglo-Egyptian Press censorship was thrown into the fray to prevent either copies of the book being sent out of Egypt or extracts cabled to the British Press. The Palace, popularly reputed to have had a certain amount to do with the appearance of the 'Black Book', saw to it, however, that the charges attained the widest possible publicity.

It is not easy to judge the charges. Two points have to be remembered: firstly, that the Egyptians have entirely different standards of public and private honesty to those commonly held in the West. All offices, from that of prime minister downwards, have certain acknowledged perquisites and everybody is aware of this: the Egyptian expects to have to pay a bribe—although commission or something a little less harsh would be the term employed—for everything, and the more important the official, the larger the 'gift'. Similarly, everybody expects an official to find jobs for *all* his friends and relatives: he would be roundly condemned if he failed to do so. The second point is that Makram Pasha's habits of exaggeration in polemic were well known, so that most people tended to write off a little of his accusations. Nahas Pasha himself had always enjoyed a reputation for complete honesty and integrity and few people believed the charges levelled at him personally. As for the members of his immediate family—few people disbelieved the charges.

By October 1944 the war had receded sufficiently far from the Middle East for the area to be any longer of concern to the War Cabinet or even to the Foreign Office. Egypt again became, almost, an independent sovereign state and when King Farouk quite summarily dismissed Nahas Pasha and his Cabinet—by a letter delivered to Nahas Pasha in an Alexandria hotel—there was no protest or move from the British Embassy. Egypt's internal affairs had become the preoccupation of Egypt alone. Nahas Pasha was succeeded by another of his former close associates. Ahmed Mahir Pasha, who, with Mahmud Nokrashi Pasha, had broken away from the Wafd six years previously and had formed the Saadist Wafdist Party. This group had, from dislike of the Wafd, veered round almost to the Palace side, and although Mahir Pasha was and remained an independent-minded politician, the Saadists initiated no new line of their own.

One of Mahir Pasha's first actions was to declare war on Germany. All through hostilities Egypt, while breaking off relations with the Axis Powers, interned their nationals, and confiscating a great deal of Italian and a lesser amount of German property, had remained technically a neutral. This somewhat tardy decision aroused a certain amusement, but in fact Mahir Pasha himself, a fiery, likeable little man, had always criticized preceding governments for not going in wholeheartedly on the Allied side. Politically, it was a shrewd move, for the Government realized that unless Egypt had belligerent status she would have no place at the Peace conference—and no pickings either. General elections were held in January 1945 and although in free elections the Wafd would certainly have been returned in overwhelming strength, elections held by a hostile government are another matter, and so rather than be defeated, the Wafd boycotted them: this is traditional in Egypt where of the major political organizations only the party arranging the elections usually takes part: the others 'abstain' as a protest against something or other. This means that Egyptian Parliament rarely has an effective opposition. To nobody's surprise, the Saadists obtained a handsome majority which they shared with their friends the Liberal Constitutionals.

Despite the Anglo-Egyptian censorship, which by this time was used far more as a political weapon than to prevent 'the enemy' obtaining military information, the Egyptian townspeople soon learnt that the Saadists were close to the Palace and, although large numbers of people can always be found to cheer the monarch in any part of Egypt, this does not mean that he is popular. To the fellah, whose income is almost entirely spent on attempting to fill his stomach, a free show is always worth watching and cheering, whether it be the King in the centre of a cavalcade of large red American limousines with police outriders on motor bicycles, or merely a local wedding.

The Saadists in fact suffered from the unpopularity of the monarch.

The policies of the other parties in the Chamber are not easy to describe. In reality they consist of groups of politicians who bind themselves together for motives of self-interest, men who will work with the Palace or against it, who unfailingly give lip service to social reforms but would make little or no effort to put their policy into

practice when the opportunity occurred. All the political parties and groups are xenophobic, the most extreme being the Watanists or Nationalists, who since the early part of the century took as their slogan 'No negotiations before evacuation'. The leader of the Watanists, Hafiz Pasha Ramadan, nowadays appears almost moderate in comparison with the leaders of some of the more recently formed Nationalist groups.

The Liberal Constitutional Party led by Husain Haikal Pasha is generally in coalition with the Saadist Party and always bitterly opposed to the Wafd. William Makram Ebeid founded yet another splinter party of the Wafd when he broke with Nahas Pasha in 1942. The party is called the Kutla Party and its influential supporters can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Makram Pasha is a man of outstanding ability who was educated at Oxford, but it is somewhat difficult to reconcile this background with the writer of violent and frequently illogical articles which appeared daily in the Cairo newspaper owned by Makram Pasha and called *Al Kutla*. Makram—like so many Egyptian politicians—is a lawyer by profession. Many of his long-standing British acquaintances do not give serious consideration to his utterances, but newcomers to Cairo are impressed by his brilliant conversation in faultless English.

Ahmed Mahir Pasha was succeeded by a less colourful premier who followed him as chief of the Saadists, Mahmud Fahmy Nokrashi Pasha. Like many other Egyptian politicians who have received their education at English universities, he was anti-British; but he was a kind man and he had great charm and a considerable sense of European as opposed to Arabic humour. Nokrashi Pasha faced the many problems—foreign and internal—which had been shelved during the war. Soon after he took office Egyptian politicians, spurred on by the Egyptian Press, began a violent campaign demanding the revision of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. At the same time it was apparent that the war, 'which had brought peace to Palestine', had ended leaving that country in an even greater turmoil than ever before in its troubled history. (The Arab League, to which Nokrashi Pasha was automatically the Egyptian delegate as soon as he became Prime Minister, was planning to prevent fresh Jewish immigration into the Holy Land.) There was, in fact, a somewhat ribald rhyme in Arabic at the time which attempted to outline Nokrashi Pasha's

policy because this policy was also that of the Arab League. A mild but printable English version might run :

To keep the French out of Syria and the Lebanon,
To drive the Russians out of Persia,
The Jews out of Palestine,
And the British out of Egypt.

Internally the situation which Nokrashi Pasha had to face was tense and difficult, due in no small measure to the activities of the Moslem Brotherhood—Ikhwan al-Muslimin. This movement, which cannot be called a political party, grew enormously in strength and importance towards the end of the war. The Brotherhood, founded as a society by a schoolmaster, in the Suez Canal area, named Hasan al-Banna, had as its main objective (as so many movements since the days of the Prophet had done) a return to the strict observances of Islam as decreed by the Koran. The society grew into a movement which was undoubtedly one of the more successful attempts in the East to put the clock back. Hasan al-Banna wanted women to go back to the harem and men to give up the Western costume which so many Egyptians had adopted. The members of the Brotherhood veiled their wives and produced large numbers of children; they gave up alcohol, the smoking of the huqqa and cigarettes, as well as the eating of pork, shell-fish and other forbidden foods. It is unfortunate that whilst they were attempting to give new life and spirit to the Moslem religion, there developed amongst the Brothers a bitter dislike of Christians and an intense xenophobia.

Many young Egyptians had been brought up to believe that they owed all their misfortunes to the foreigners—especially the British—who lived in their midst. The semi-educated young men of the towns who could read and write but had not obtained posts which they considered adequate for their talents, flocked to the support of the Brothers. Many of them who had been to considerable trouble to acquire a veneer of so-called Western civilization found it difficult to drop the way of life—the clothes and manners—they had so carefully assumed. But the sight of Englishmen at work in Cairo, or British soldiers guarding Egyptian bridges, generally succeeded in inflaming them sufficiently, illogical though it was, to condemn the

West as corrupt and effete and to work for a return to the 'fundamental purity of primitive Islam'.

Naturally such a movement is bound to assume a political complexion. Many Brothers during the early part of the war were sympathetic to the Axis Powers—perhaps because they were and are violently anti-Jewish. (It is absurd to use the word anti-Semitic, as the Arabs are themselves a Semitic race.)

It is amusing and not unprofitable to compare the Moslem Brotherhood with its counterpart in Roumania—the Iron Guard—which was created a little earlier in a country which, like Egypt, was formerly an important province in the Ottoman Empire. Both movements were founded by men of lower-middle-class or peasant background with limited education. They combined a flair for leadership and a full grasp of the necessity for their movements to have material backing, whilst mingling religious fervour with mysticism, anti-Jewish sentiments, and violent xenophobia, completed by a vague desire to improve the lot of the poor.

The Iron Guard, like the Brotherhood, received considerable material support from the Palace until King Carol rather suddenly felt the Iron Guard had grown too powerful for his comfort, so he cut off the subsidies, and soon afterwards the Roumanian Government declared the party illegal. The leader, Codreanu, was shot in mysterious circumstances—no one quite knew where or exactly when—but it was announced by the Government propaganda office that he was shot when trying to escape from the truck in which he was being taken to prison. Before the movement was proscribed, terrorist groups were formed and these were well armed and trained. There is no doubt that they were penetrated by Communists and, although it was not recognized at the time, the extreme Right and Communist forces were working together. They remained together throughout a period of illegality, when the Communist members taught the Right-wing members a great deal about underground political work which they carried out most effectively in Bukarest.

When finally the ban on the Iron Guard was lifted the movement became powerful enough to demand seats in the Cabinet, although the new leader, Horia Sima, had neither the looks, the full mysticism, nor the force of character of the murdered Codreanu. At one period the Iron Guard had their own private police force and they arrested

and imprisoned their enemies, the Roumanian State Police being impotent to interfere. The rival factions within the Iron Guard came to blows on several occasions. It was difficult to reconcile the deep religious mysticism of Codreanu's father—one of the leaders after his son's death—with the materialism of the terrorist groups of the extreme Right and extreme Left. On the whole the movement did grow in numbers and importance until the German occupation in October 1940. The civil war which followed this early in 1941 destroyed the main body of the movement and the leader, Horia Sima, was considered most fortunate to make his escape to Germany. Thereafter the terrorists ceased activity on any serious scale, though some Communist-infiltrated groups are believed to have remained passively in being until they began operations prior to the entry of the Red Army into Roumania.

The Moslem Brotherhood was not active during the critical period of the war in Africa, but as the Eighth Army swept the Afrika Corps farther away from Egyptian soil the Brotherhood began to work with a new vigour. There is no doubt that the Palace supplied funds. They also lent buildings to be put at the disposal of branches of the Brothers which began to operate in the suburbs of Cairo as well as in provincial towns and even in some of the larger villages. Newspaper space was placed at their disposal. It is clear now that the Palace hoped to build up a strong religious party of the Right to act as a counterblast to the Wafd. But like King Carol a decade earlier they had not allowed for the quiet strength the movement developed. The Brothers were sincere in their beliefs that the West was corrupt and only a return to the primitive tenets of Islam could save Egypt. They were highly critical of a Court whose members drank whisky, smoked cigars and cigarettes, and indulged in frequent and public gambling.

Supplies were cut off, but the Brotherhood by this time was strong enough to manage without them. They organized an efficient scheme for the collection of a small individual levy on all the Brothers, and special funds were started in order that a force could be sent, at a later date, to Palestine to fight the Jews. A brilliant organization was also created whose object was to steal arms and ammunition, food and uniforms from the large British ordnance dumps which

were being disbanded as hostilities ceased in the Far East. There is every reason to believe that by the end of hostilities in the Far East many of the terrorist groups inside the Brotherhood were led by Communists, and the central organization and the founder and leader of the whole movement—Hasan al-Banna—experienced considerable difficulty in retaining them under control. The systematic large-scale stealing by armed gangs from the British Army camps was undertaken by such highly trained Arabs, working under a command which was so efficient that British intelligence officers believed they must have received their training and perhaps inspiration from outside Egypt.

The Soviet Union, during the later part of the war, did open a large Legation in Cairo (as in Beirut). This Legation was largely staffed by Russian Moslems, who prayed each Friday in the Mosques and lived amongst the lower-middle-class Egyptians in districts never inhabited by Europeans.

The Saadist Government gradually became aware of the danger of the Brotherhood. The police occasionally discovered dangerously large arms dumps. The Prime Minister, Nokrashi Pasha, was in a most difficult position when sporadic disturbances broke out throughout the country. He felt that a large proportion of the lower middle-classes and the fellah were in sympathy with the rioters. Nokrashi Pasha was just about to open negotiations with the British Government for a new treaty to replace that of 1936, and he was naturally anxious for discussions to begin in a cordial and serene atmosphere. Those people who, having lived in Egypt, know with what small sums of money and what little effort demonstrations can be organized in Cairo, should not include the disturbances of early 1946 in this category. The two reasons why the forces of law and order were able to hold the situation through three difficult months were that the two rival camps of rioters—the Wafd and the Moslem Brothers—were almost as anxious to fight one another as they were to unseat the Government, and that the Egyptian police was still led by British officers of great experience and understanding of mob mentality. They had the undivided loyalty of the police force, which would have been most difficult for an Egyptian to achieve, and, in addition, they knew that if the situation grew really out of hand they could call on that small group of British soldiers garrisoned in the pinkish-red

Kasr el Nil barracks in the centre of the city. The damage inflicted by that section of the mob which was led by the Brothers to the Anglican Cathedral and the Bishop's house left few in doubt about the fanatical anti-Christian section in the movement.

Nokrashi Pasha weathered the earlier riots, but resigned because of great pressure in political circles. The non-party Egyptian politicians who, each evening, visit the famous Mohammed Ali Club in the centre of Cairo made it clear to Nokrashi Pasha that, lacking any support in the country, he was not sufficiently strong to undertake treaty negotiations with the British and preserve order in Egypt. Nokrashi Pasha resigned, not to make way for a Wafdist Government, which would have represented a large proportion of the people, but for Sidky Pasha, generally believed to be the strong man of Egypt.

Ismail Sidky Pasha, although seventy-one years old, was the most able politician in the country. The only Egyptian an Englishman might call a statesman, he was one of a fast-diminishing band of independent politicians who could be called on to form a government—or serve in a government—in time of national crisis. Sidky Pasha was the most able negotiator Egypt had produced, and no better choice could have been made as the leader of the Egyptian delegation for the treaty talks. He spoke a language which international bankers and businessmen could understand; he was, alas, too frequently talking above the heads of his own countrymen.

Sidky Pasha had a French education, and he could not even speak English. As an official he became known for his outstanding abilities as an administrator, and he became an under-secretary. In company with many other Egyptian politicians he was one of the early members of the Wafd, but he left them to form a party of his own which, like so many other so-called political parties in Egypt, never had any real following outside the leader's personal supporters in Cairo, the tenants on his country estate, and the workers on his cotton plantation. Sidky had an enormous capacity for work, and in addition to his outstanding political career, he made a considerable fortune as one of Egypt's leading financiers. As a result of years of overwork, coupled, possibly, with too much play, he had a stroke in 1931. He made an astonishing recovery, confounding his enemies who imagined he was finished, but was seriously ill again just before the war. After

this second severe sickness, Sidky Pasha never quite recovered his former vigour or capacity for work, but he remained Egypt's leading statesman and it was to him that the King looked in February 1946.

Sidky Pasha somewhat reluctantly took office and gradually put down the disorders and established a tranquil country in time to reopen treaty negotiations with Britain in May of that year.

ANGLO-EGYPTIAN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

THE negotiations for a new Anglo-Egyptian treaty, to replace the agreement of 1936, which had by then run only half its allotted span, opened in an atmosphere of faint optimism, at any rate so far as the two governments were concerned. The Egyptians felt they deserved, and indeed expected, favourable treatment because of their 'loyal support' for the Allies during the war, and they were under the impression that a Labour Government in Whitehall, with really strong backing in the country, would be in a position and willing to concede those points Egypt considered were essential to satisfy the famous 'national aspirations', which were the rallying point of Egyptian public opinion—such as it was. They believed, too, that even the Conservative Opposition was, at that time, friendly to the Arab cause in general and the Egyptian case in particular. They were fully aware of the increasing tension in Palestine, but at this period few Arab politicians believed that Britain would allow the Jews to become too strong because, in their opinion, 'it is obviously greatly to British interests to retain the friendship and support of the Arab world'. The Egyptian Press, with more than a hint of wishful thinking, recalled how the British had helped the sister-countries of Syria and the Lebanon achieve their independence even at the cost of a bitter quarrel with the French.

At this time the United States diplomatic representatives in Cairo were not particularly interested in the Egyptian political situation, and their influence, which increased most considerably as the post-war years went by, was not then great. During the war, when American forces were fighting in the Middle East theatre, the American Ambassador had obtained for them the same rights and privileges which British troops enjoyed under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. This meant, in practice, that men and supplies could come into Egypt without any form of control, supervision, or payment of duty: visas were not required for service personnel nor import licences for military supplies. These concessions terminated soon

after the end of hostilities, but with various missions and a greatly enlarged staff at the American Embassy, there were far more Americans in Egypt in 1946 than there had been before the war. Despite a certain apprehension and indeed anger at already evident American support for the Zionists in Palestine, Egyptians believed that the United States supported their demands for full independence. Russia was still rosily regarded as a gallant wartime ally and there was no fear, or indeed realization, of any potential Soviet menace: no one certainly stopped to consider what the Russians thought of the treaty revision.

Almost as soon as he took office Ismail Sidky Pasha announced that his negotiations with Britain would begin in the near future. He attempted to form another all-party 'united front' delegation such as had successfully negotiated the Treaty of 1936, but the Wafd, led by Nahas Pasha, refused to participate unless they had a majority on the delegation. Sidky Pasha offered them two places in a projected delegation of twelve, but this they contemptuously turned down. When they found they had no chance of being allowed to take part on their own terms, they immediately began a campaign to sabotage the talks, even before they had begun. The strict all-embracing wartime censorship had recently been lifted, and the influential Wafdist newspapers took full advantage of their new freedom to attack the Egyptian and British governments and to misrepresent every facet of the negotiations: nobody who knows the Egyptian Press could have expected anything else—for sheer malicious irresponsibility it has no equal. Officially, the Wafd issued the usual unnecessarily long manifesto about the negotiations: it stated that they would not be bound by the results. But this, which was only to be expected, did not particularly bother the negotiators on either side.

It was not, however, only the Wafdist newspapers that were hostile to the negotiations. Sidky Pasha himself had no newspaper of his own, but the organs that were favourable to his Government were opposed to the discussions and gave their reports and their editorial views a strong anti-British twist. The Egyptian Press as a whole is traditionally anti-British and anti-foreign, but it was exceptionally so in this post-war period, mainly because the 'subventions', which had been somewhat lavish, bestowed by official British organizations during the war, when it was essential to have

the Press on the Allied side, had been stopped. 'Privileges', ranging from difficult-to-obtain aeroplane passages to surreptitious gifts of bottles of exceedingly rare whisky, had been given to editors: Allied offices paid far larger sums than were necessary for the insertion of unnecessary advertisements: and the organization responsible for the allocation of newsprint provided generous supplies to supposedly pro-British newspaper proprietors, who then sold them at an enormous profit. At the bottom of the list, a few reporters received monthly subsidies. When the war came to an end and the many wartime organizations in the Middle East shut down, these blessings ceased abruptly, and all they accomplished was to leave behind much bitterness in the minds of the men who had received the bounty. It would have been well worth while to have continued this practice until at least the negotiations had been completed.

The publicity side of the talks was also badly handled. The public relations branch of the British delegation, through little or no fault of the officials working on it, was inept. It is extremely difficult to handle correspondents during delicate negotiations unless the people on both sides, the officials and the reporters, are experienced. If the Press is told too much it can easily cause a breakdown by premature publication of still unagreed points; but if told nothing, newspapers may cause equal confusion and suspicion by building up highly coloured stories on the little they are able to discover. That applies even when the Press is both friendly and reasonably responsible: when, as in Egypt, it is irresponsible and hostile, the problem becomes many times more delicate. The British delegates, presumably on the grounds that they were the guests, as it were, of the Egyptian side, gave out practically no information at all. Consequently reporters, foreign as well as local, were obliged to go for their news to Egyptian officials. In this way the story that the negotiations had completely broken down was printed almost before the two delegations had met. As always, too, far too little attention was paid to the broadcasts which could have influenced millions of Egyptians who, unable to read, listen assiduously to the radio, which is available to them in every town and village café. The Foreign Office had control over a radio station then operating in Jerusalem in Arabic specially for the Arab world. This station, called Shark al Adna, employed highly paid Arabic singers to popularize its programmes, but constantly

failed to make telling political points in the talks that followed the songs.

On 14th March Sidky Pasha made public the composition of his delegation which, despite the absence of the Wafd, was strong and fairly representative, and shortly afterwards Mr. Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Minister, announced that Lord Stansgate, Secretary of State for Air, would lead the British delegation, which would include, in addition to the British Ambassador to Egypt, Sir Ronald Campbell, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, a former British Ambassador to Iraq, and Sir Arnold Overton. Assisting the delegation, and of enormous value to the members, was Sir Walter Smart, Oriental Minister at the British Embassy, a man of wide experience of the ways of Egyptian politicians.

Preliminary talks began in Cairo on 23rd April, and on 7th May Mr. Attlee announced in the House of Commons :

‘It is the considered policy of His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom to consolidate their alliance with Egypt as one between two equal nations having interests in common. In pursuance of this policy, negotiations have begun in an atmosphere of cordiality and goodwill. The Government of the United Kingdom have proposed the withdrawal of all British naval, military, and air forces from Egyptian territory, and to settle in negotiations the stages and date of completion of this withdrawal and the arrangements to be made by the Egyptian Government to make possible mutual assistance in time of war or imminent threat of war in accordance with the terms of the Alliance.’

Sidky Pasha, on the following day, welcomed Mr. Attlee’s statement and replied :

‘Egypt and Britain are beginning negotiations in an atmosphere of friendship to settle the stages and the date of completion (of evacuation), and measures that the Egyptian Government will have to take to ensure mutual assistance in time of war or the threat of war. The Egyptian negotiators will be very careful to see that this co-operation is kept within the limits of the San Francisco Charter and within the interests of Egypt.’

‘A new chapter is opening in Anglo-Egyptian relations, in

spite of the fact that in both countries there exist people who doubt very much the outcome of the new phase. . . . I personally believe that the complete evacuation and an alliance with Britain within the San Francisco Charter are a great blessing to Egypt.'

Sidky Pasha added that his Government had decided to conclude a special agreement with the Security Council, putting Egyptian arms and the right of passage through Egypt at the disposal of a world security force.

When formal negotiations began both delegations echoed the two Prime Ministers' cheerful optimism. The main points at issue seemed to be the time it would take the British Army and the Royal Air Force to evacuate their bases and to withdraw the very appreciable supplies already installed there, and the type of organization to be set up to enable joint Anglo-Egyptian action in the event of a threat of war. In view of the fantastic speed with which modern warfare can move from one area to another, and because of Egypt's strategic importance to the West, which the Egyptians at that time recognized, it was necessary to come to an agreement on reliable defence measures before drafting of the new treaty could be begun.

British opinion then, as now, was divided into two schools represented by the soldiers and the diplomats, by the War Office and the Foreign Office. The War Office was most reluctant to give up the excellent Egyptian bases, which, moreover, contained much valuable equipment which could not easily be moved. Outside Palestine, where at the time of the negotiations the British mandate still ran, the Army could find no Middle Eastern base offering similar facilities to those they enjoyed in the Canal Zone. The soldiers argued that a base must have good harbour facilities, a fresh water supply, a network of good roads and railways in the hinterland, and a large pool of skilled or semi-skilled labour. The R.A.F. maintained that the Egyptian base fulfilled all those requisites for them also, and in addition the desert provided all the space in the world for the establishment of aerodromes and landing-grounds within reach of the base. The weather in Egypt was uniformly good for flying.

The Services lost to the Foreign Office. The diplomats realized that it would be far easier—perhaps the only possible way—to negotiate a new treaty if the British Government agreed to withdraw her troops

from Egypt within a given period. Relations between officials working in the cool rooms overlooking the green lawns of the British Embassy and the officers five minutes' walk away in the hot little offices of Grey Pillars—a block of flats which from the early days of the war onwards had housed the Commander-in-Chief and his staff—were by no means cordial. A further deterioration occurred when the Commander-in-Chief was ordered to make immediate arrangements to move his G.H.Q. Apart from any strictly military considerations, the staff enjoyed life in Cairo with its splendid clubs and other means of recreation ; they knew they would dislike the Canal Zone—as did nearly everybody there.

One point at issue between England and Egypt was not, however, to be brought within the scope of the treaty talks. The British Government was most anxious that the large sterling balances which Egypt had amassed during the war by the lavish expenditure of the armed forces should not be brought into these discussions. The Treasury representatives would hold their own talks with the Egyptian Minister of Finance and representatives of the National Bank of Egypt. The treaty negotiations were to remain entirely political and military without the possibility of economic or financial blackmail or bribe.

The negotiations continued throughout the long hot summer in Cairo and then in Alexandria, and by October a definite outline of the probable outcome had been established. But progress was extremely slow, as most of the Egyptian delegates disliked the idea of Egypt's being tied to Great Britain in any sort of an alliance : they wanted the complete abolition of the military clauses and of any military obligations. Even as far back as 1946 the Egyptians were hankering after the position of complete neutrality in any future world conflict for which they have since made so determined a bid. Sidky Pasha, one of the last clear-sighted Egyptian politicians, then decided to discuss the whole situation with Mr. Bevin, who although nominal leader of the British delegation had been prevented by the pressure of other business from going to Egypt to take part in the negotiations. Sidky Pasha flew to London by himself and after a few meetings with Mr. Bevin an agreed text was drawn up.

The other members of the Egyptian delegation shied like frightened horses at a clause establishing a Joint Defence Board, and so Sidky

Pasha requested King Farouk to dissolve the delegation and empower him to continue the negotiations alone with Mr. Bevin. The Egyptian Prime Minister and the British Foreign Secretary then produced a suggested text, of which the most important points were :

1. That all British forces would be withdrawn from Cairo, Alexandria and the Delta by 31st March 1947, and that the final evacuation of Egyptian territory would be completed by September 1949.

2. That in the event of Egypt being attacked or the United Kingdom being involved in a war as a result of attack against countries adjacent to Egypt, both governments in close co-operation and after consultation would take such action as might be recognized necessary until the Security Council had taken the necessary measures for the restoration of peace. To secure this mutual co-operation and the co-ordination of mutual defence, a Joint Board of Defence would be set up to advise both governments on the measures to be taken for their mutual defence when so required.

3. The joint policy for the Sudan to be followed by both governments 'within the framework of the unity between the Sudan and Egypt under the common crown of Egypt', would be to assure the welfare of the Sudanese, 'the development of their interests, and their active preparation for self-government and consequently for the exercise of the right to choose the future status of the Sudan'; and that until these objects should be attained provisions of the Condominium Convention would remain in force.

Whether this agreement would even have been agreed by an Egyptian Government or ratified by an Egyptian Parliament must always remain a matter of strong doubt. But in actual fact there was never an opportunity of putting it to a test. An incident occurred when the aeroplane bearing Sidky Pasha back to Egypt landed at Cairo airport, and which could probably have occurred in no other country, which effectively ruined any chances the Bevin-Sidky draft had of obtaining approval. A bitterly anti-British Egyptian journalist who had accompanied Sidky Pasha to London gave an interview to his brethren who had clustered round the Prime Minister's plane.

He told them neither he nor Sidky Pasha could be quoted but, in fact, an agreement had been reached in England which was extremely harmful to Egypt and which permitted the British to retain their position in the Sudan. The next morning the entire Egyptian Press was filled with a violent outcry against the still unpublished text, and Sidky Pasha did not trouble to deny the stories ; he knew his countrymen and he knew that in the face of this blind unreasoning nationalism neither truth nor reason could prevail. The British Government did issue a denial, but it was disregarded in Cairo and the negotiations had virtually collapsed.

The text of Article 3, particularly when translated into Arabic, did in fact give scope for misunderstanding, especially when both countries wanted a different solution to the future of that large territory. Egypt wanted control over the Sudan and the unity of the two countries 'under the Egyptian crown'; what the British text really implied by the 'common crown of Egypt' was not understood. But it was clear that England intended the Sudan to become self-governing—and all the (very few) Egyptians who had studied the Sudan question or knew anything about the Sudanese other than the arrant nonsense published in the Egyptian Press, knew full well that if the Sudan was free to choose its own future status, Egypt would play no part in it.

The problem was not, however, quite so simple as that. Whether the Sudan remained under a British administration or became a free, independent country, unless it was friendly disposed towards Egypt it remained in the eyes of many Egyptians a potentially serious threat to Egypt's very existence. This thought was probably at the back of the minds of those Egyptians who, thoughtfully and not just out of exuberant nationalism, wished Egypt to have control over the Sudan. The River Nile, upon which not only the prosperity but the very existence of Egypt depends, after rising in central Africa and Abyssinia, runs through the Sudan before reaching Egypt. A hostile régime in the Sudan could divert to its own uses sufficient Nile water most seriously to impair Egypt's vast and utterly vital irrigation system, and it could, by a major and long feat of engineering, divert the river, which would swiftly reduce Egypt to barren desert. Neither course is remotely likely to be taken ; indeed every effort is continuously being made to improve the flow of Nile water. But it



MAP III: THE SUDAN

could happen, and some Egyptians have not forgotten that Lord Allenby, then High Commissioner for Egypt and the Sudan, delivered an ultimatum to Egypt after the murder in Cairo of Sir Lee Stack, Sirdar of the Sudan Defence Force, which contained the demand for Egyptian consent to 'the unlimited irrigation of the Sudanese cotton-growing district of the Gezireh' where previously the amount of

irrigation water from the Nile had been limited to ensure that adequate supplies went through to Egypt.

When the negotiations appeared to be breaking down completely, disturbances broke out in Khartoum. The Umma Party, which demands self-government, took alarm at speeches by Sidky Pasha and other Egyptian politicians which appeared to suggest that Egypt was about to assume sovereignty over the Sudan. Their leader, Sir Abdel Rahman el Mahdi, son of the Mahdi who led the revolt against the Egyptians in 1881, went to London to interview the British Government, and on 7th December the Governor-General announced that while the British Government were proposing to acknowledge the Egyptian Crown as the titular sovereign over the Sudan, 'the Government were determined that nothing should be permitted to deflect the Sudan Government from their task of preparing the Sudanese for self-government'.

This effectively ended the negotiations, and the following day Sidky Pasha resigned, to be succeeded by Mahmoud Fahmy el Nokrashi Pasha. Nokrashi Pasha, leader of the Saadists, was far more nationalistic than Sidky Pasha, both out of conviction and because, as the leader of a political party, he knew that he could command support only by being more extreme and, in the end, obtaining more than his great opponents the Wafd had ever succeeded in doing. He officially broke off the long-drawn-out negotiations and declared that when he talked about the unity of Egypt and the Sudan he meant 'the permanent unity'. Instead of initiating negotiations of his own, Nokrashi Pasha took Egypt's case to the Security Council, where in a flood of anti-British virulence and considerable misrepresentation, he pursued it with vigour. Nokrashi Pasha affirmed, for example, that in demanding the permanent unity of Egypt and the Sudan he was expressing the unanimous feelings of all the inhabitants of the Nile Valley—that is to say, of both countries. There has, in fact, never been more than a small minority of Sudanese—who incidentally were in Egyptian pay—who favoured Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan. Conversely, there are only an insignificant number of Egyptians who would in any circumstances consent to work in the Sudan, which Egyptians consider a barbarous, savage country. Nokrashi Pasha also alleged that the 1936 Treaty was signed under pressure and that it was incompatible with the

Charter of the United Nations—a quite indispensable document for all Middle Eastern statesmen who flourish it continually when they are trying to escape their obligations but tactfully ignore it when it might interfere with their designs. The Security Council reached no decision but recommended that the ‘parties to the dispute’ should settle the matter themselves ‘by direct negotiation’: strikingly useful advice which Britain has been attempting to take ever since.

It was interesting to note the marked lack of support Britain received from the United States on this matter: the first sign of the attitude, unhelpful if not actively hostile, the United States was to adopt increasingly towards Britain’s Middle Eastern problems. The direct reason may have been the Sudan Government’s refusal to allow the United States to open a consulate in Khartoum, on the plea that the condominium agreement made no provision for foreign representation in the Sudan—and anyway, they added privately, if the United States opened a Consulate, how could they prevent the Soviet Union following suit?

By this time the Palestine question was just beginning to attract public attention in Egypt, and agitation was increasing for action of some kind ‘to help our threatened Arab brothers’. Volunteers were enrolled for the Liberation Army, and the regular Egyptian Army started intensive training. British popularity, never particularly high, fell to new depths.

Egypt’s only serious rival for leadership of the Middle East is Iraq, a country one-third of its size and with only a quarter of its population.

CHAPTER V

IRAQ

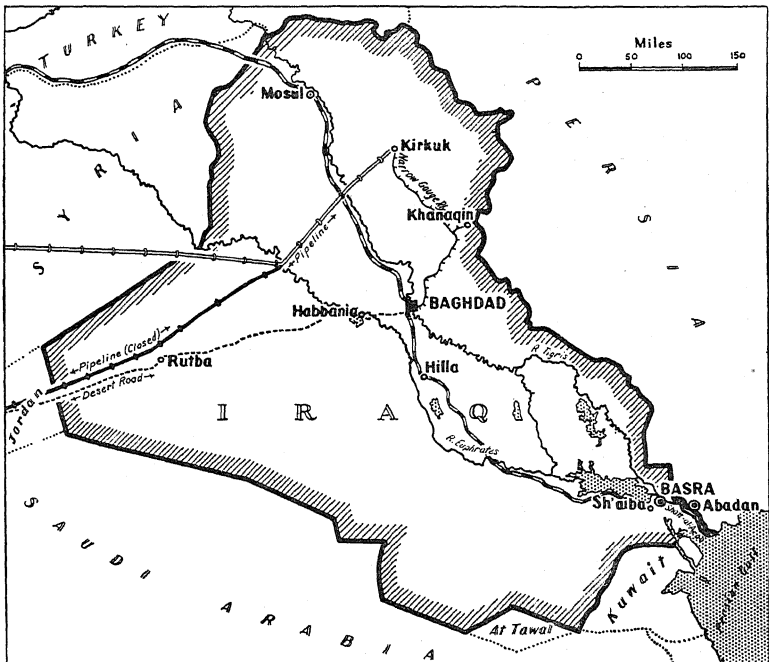
AT first sight possibly the most unpromising of the larger Arab countries, Iraq has in fact considerable potentialities. It is a country in which rich petroleum deposits have been discovered and worked ; it produces the largest and one of the best date crops in the world, and its agriculture in general is capable of almost limitless expansion. Iraq suffers from no lack of land or, far more important, of water. The country is still heavily underpopulated, so that there is not the tremendous pressure on space from which Egypt, for example, suffers so dangerously. But there is a vast amount of work to be done, a crushing backlog of ignorance, poverty, and neglect to be fought. Iraq got off to a bad start. It was the poorest relation of the Arab members of the Ottoman Empire, fleeced and neglected at one and the same time. But its people are hot-blooded, impetuous, and brave ; and corrupt, despotic Turkish Pashas experienced more trouble in Iraq than from rebellious subjects anywhere else. This, of course, led to specially repressive methods of government, and Iraq was rarely free from troubles of some kind. The Turks made clever use of the tribes, especially the large Kurdish minority, and encouraged internecine strife as a slight variation of the fine old ' divide and rule ' theory. They even managed to extend this, in the days when Turkish power was waning, to encourage rivalry between Britain and Germany who both had strategic eyes on this link in the route to India.

Just as the Turks gave the Iraqis little or no education, so they allowed no political parties, and by the time independence—strictly limited by the British Mandate—was won after the Arab Revolt in World War I, Iraq was hopelessly backward. Some outstanding men, however, were to be found among its leaders, particularly King Faisal, whose premature death was a tragedy, and Nuri Pasha es Said, who has remained the one constant and reliable factor in the country's political and international life. Both King Faisal and Nuri Pasha were Lawrence's men and derived prestige from the parts

they had played in the war. Many of the lesser known leaders, and most particularly some of the army officers, were equally strong characters in their own way, and the constant ferment and agitation that had marked the Ottoman domination, continued through the early years of the Mandate, allotted to Britain at the Peace Conference in 1919. It was probably due to the long drain on British money and British lives that nominal independence was granted far too soon; Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations in 1930 and Britain's relations with this troublesome Arab country were then placed upon the 'Treaty of Friendship and Alliance' basis. As was to be expected, that brought no end to the disturbances which continually racked the country. They reached their culminating point in the early years of World War II and might have had extremely serious results. Led by a violently anti-British political agitator, Rashid Ali el Kilaini, who was certainly also in German pay, there was a full-scale revolt in which four Iraqi colonels led the bulk of the Iraq Army in an attack upon British bases and installations, their object being to liquidate or expel the British and hand over to the Germans who were at that time winning the war and who had, all through, paid particular attention to Iraq. The Rashid Ali *coup* failed, for his revolt was ill-organized and badly timed and the promised German assistance did not materialize. The Regent—the Emir Abdul Ilah, uncle of the present king, Faisal II—and Nuri Pasha escaped into Transjordan, and a scratch British force, including a brigade of the Arab Legion which fought extremely well, broke up the revolt and order was restored. It had, however, been touch and go, for anti-British feeling, often strong in Iraq, had been fanned to boiling point and at the first signs of a success for the revolutionaries or weakness or indecision on the part of the British, the whole country would have joined in and Iraq would have been lost to the Germans.

It was possibly a result of the abortive attempt to replace Britain by Germany that from 1941 onwards there were not only appreciable British military forces in Iraq, but also large numbers of technical advisers and other trained personnel, who were able to assist Nuri Pasha's Government in running the country, and to set the public services on a better footing. For once, too, there was a certain measure of internal security, and travelling over Iraq's rudimentary roads lost a good part of its pre-war risks—except, of course, that of breaking

springs and other portions of the vehicle. The same type of controls which the British Army established in Egypt and other countries were set up in Iraq and worked well: the cost of living was kept remarkably stable and Baghdad, Basra and other Iraqi towns were notable for the reasonable prices charged for beds and meals—and drinks. That was at least some slight compensation for the atrocious



MAP IV: IRAQ

climate—blindingly hot in the summer, arid, dusty and drab, and beastly cold and wet in the winter. Apart from the huge sums of money spent by the Allied forces, Iraq also benefited by a great deal of road building undertaken for strategic reasons, the reconstruction of Baghdad airfield, and the rebuilding and enlargement of the harbour and all other facilities at Basra, a major task. These works were undertaken to a great extent in order to facilitate the flow of supplies to Russia from Britain and the United States. The main supply route to the Soviet was through Persia, but Iraq furnished an

important secondary channel, due to the obvious advantages of Basra harbour.

One of those unreal, almost unbelievable wartime incidents which occupied the time and attention of a number of senior generals, admirals, and diplomats took place in Iraq. The service chiefs decided that an alternative harbour must be built for supplies to be landed in case the Germans broke through the Caucasus—as they were then expected to do—and made Basra unusable by bombing. The naval experts chose as the site of the new harbour a mudflat called Umm Kasr, near a creek in the Persian Gulf, on the frontier between Iraq and the Sheikhdome of Kuwait. An artificial harbour was built here with a township of air-conditioned huts, radio installations, a landing-ground, and roads to replace the desert tracks connecting the harbour with Basra. Huts were built, too, to house the local Arab labourers who came from Kuwait and the Basra district. Soon the question arose—was Umm Kasr in Iraq or Kuwait? because both the Government of Iraq and the Sheikh of Kuwait claimed this property which appeared to them at the time to have considerable value. The British Ambassador flew to Umm Kasr taking many maps with him. These did not help much, as it is a characteristic of the Persian Gulf that over a period of a few years, new mud and sand banks are created and old ones disappear. The site just could not be pinpointed. The General Officer Commanding the British troops in Iraq flew there with more maps; representatives of Kuwait and Iraq met to haggle over sovereignty but no conclusion was ever reached, though soldiers, politicians, and diplomats spent months in debate. The wise geographer, if well informed enough to have heard of this desert creation, would mark Umm Kasr exactly on the frontier. When the fortunes of war began to change and the German threat from the Caucasus faded, Umm Kasr was quietly dismantled and just disappeared. A little foresight, either on the part of British Service Chiefs or on that of any of the managers of the Persian Gulf oil companies, would surely have made it clear that this new port would have been a most valuable acquisition: it would have been invaluable for the infant oil company in Kuwait which was to develop so strikingly shortly after the war.

The superficial prosperity which the war and the presence of a large Allied army brought to Iraq, combined with the steady

effect of a strong government headed by Nuri Pasha, gave a false picture to any politically minded visitor during the years between the suppression of the Rashid Ali revolt and the termination of hostilities. The country was, too, flooded with British propaganda, some of it well-planned but most of it frankly futile. None of these various influences did more than take a temporary edge off the smouldering Iraqi nationalism which was ever just beneath the surface. Xenophobia indeed spread rapidly, because, possibly, it was damped down by wartime controls. The Iraqi attitude towards the British and the foreigner generally was a curious phenomenon: there seemed no valid reason, apart from the natural fieriness of the Iraqi character, why the Iraqi, above all other Arabs, should be so intransigent. He had not been badly treated; indeed, many of the British officials who served in Iraq between the two wars were not only quite first class but were imbued with a genuine liking for the Iraqis and a strong desire to do everything possible to improve the condition of their excessively backward country. Some of the wartime importations, the officers, officials, and businessmen who had no previous knowledge of the Middle East, no experience of dealing with Arabs, might curse them as dirty, stupid, and unco-operative. But the bitter anti-British feeling ante-dated that period. The Iraqi Army, trained by a British Military Mission, whose members liked and apparently got on well with their Iraqi opposite numbers, was frequently in the van of the movement; officers were heard to argue that Britain was fighting against the Axis merely in order to have an excuse for returning to Baghdad as an occupying power. Nuri Pasha's declaration of war against a beaten Germany in 1943 brought no appreciable improvement in the internal situation. He is believed to have taken this step after an assurance from the British Government that they would give full backing to the formation of the Arab League—which was basically Nuri's brain-child—and it is probable that he felt a certain personal bitterness that his efforts did not lead to greater British support for the Palestine Arabs in the dispute which emerged as the major issue in the Middle East soon after the end of the war.

Like all the other Arab countries in the first flush of independence, Iraq had adopted a parliamentary system and a machinery of constitutional government totally unsuited to the vast political ignorance and nearly total illiteracy of its people. Various leaders arose—heads

of little groups of supporters—but although political parties were permitted to operate again in 1946, after a period of wartime proscription, the Iraqis as a whole were unable to participate in their country's political life. An excellent illustration of the fundamental weakness of the political situation is given in *The Middle East*, the Royal Institute of International Affairs' all-embracing survey of political and economic conditions. It writes :

' In the 22 years following the establishment of the Iraq Government there were 33 changes of Cabinet and 85 different individuals held office as ministers. About half of these were experimental appointments of short duration. The remainder have appeared and reappeared continuously throughout the period, and have in most cases grown rich on the perquisites accepted as accruing to those in their position.'

This is, of course, no different in any way from the situation in any other of the Arab countries, but the chronic instability was slightly more serious in Iraq, both because the country seemed to produce fewer outstanding men and because there was always greater turbulence : Iraq, it might be argued, needed a firmer hand at the helm than many of its slightly more supine neighbours. The Government over a long period has in fact been—General Nuri es Said Pasha, who has appeared in and out of office with jack-in-the-box regularity. After the war he was a tired and far from well man who genuinely wished for a period of retirement. His ministers and the Cabinets that replaced his on the few occasions when he was not at the head of the Government were composed of rich landowners, what remained of the Turkish ruling classes, and, gradually, the lawyers who are becoming the political *élite* of the Middle East. They were mainly Sunni Moslems, who are slightly better educated and more advanced than the Shi'as, of whom there are, however, about the same number—roughly two millions out of a total population of five millions. A tolerably inoffensive Kurd was often popped into the Cabinet in the hope (quite vain) that this would induce the ever-bullient 800,000 strong minority to moderate their violently anti-governmental activities. The small Christian communities also had an occasional representative in the upper ranks of the administration, but despite or because of their usually sharper wits and deeper

knowledge of trade and commerce the prejudice against them was such that they could never rise to the top.

Until the troubles in Palestine got well under way, it was not unusual to find a member of the large, 100,000 strong, Jewish community holding a senior position in the administration. The Iraqi Jews indeed formed a valuable asset in the country's life. They lived mainly in Baghdad or Basra and, far more than the smaller Christian minorities, held the reins in the country's commercial life. They claimed to be amongst the oldest settlers in Iraq, they had long been totally assimilated, they spoke Arabic, dressed and looked like anyone else and were barely distinguishable from their pure Arab fellow citizens. And with very few exceptions, they were anti-Zionist, a movement from which they had practically everything to lose and remarkably little to gain. When the first dread signs of anti-Jewish feeling spread slowly over the Middle East as the State of Israel became more than a vague Zionist dream, it is probable that the Iraqi Jews were not greatly disturbed. Their position had for so long been so secure, so unassailable and their relations with the Arabs so placid that they surely felt that nothing would happen to them. Further, they wielded considerable influence. None of these factors saved them.

Baghdad, to the romantically minded visitor who expects to find at least some vestiges of Haroun el Rashid's dream city, is a shattering disappointment. It is one of the most unattractive towns in the Middle East, possessing hardly one good building, one interesting historic site. In few places is the appalling poverty of nine-tenths of the population so rapidly apparent. On the other hand, there is none of the flashy opulence of the wealthy classes in Egypt or the Lebanon. And after a time it is not difficult to cultivate an affection for Baghdad, which has a certain bustling vitality except in the height of the summer when it just goes to sleep.

The second most important city, Basra, is an exceedingly busy port set in the midst of the world's greatest date plantations, in which several thousands of a peculiar tribe of 'marsh Arabs' live in abysmal squalor and poverty. By nature lazy and feckless they spend the greater part of the year lounging about in the swampy shade of the palm trees on which they, or more particularly the women and children, work during the date harvest. The huge date groves are owned mainly by wealthy landowners who rent out a few trees,

occasionally even only half a tree, to their tenants in return for their labour. The yield from the odd tree keeps the peasant alive, and the condition of stupefied misery into which he has fallen over long years of this kind of existence prevents his wishing in any way to improve his lot, while the landowner's already considerable profits are greatly increased by the infinitesimal costs of operation. Much the same system is applied to other forms of agriculture.

The Iraqis, like the Egyptians, are the inheritors of an ancient civilization during which the country was far more intensively cultivated than it is to-day. This was achieved by large-scale irrigation works which if primitive in comparison to the great dams and barrages of to-day were certainly effective. Traces of them can be seen criss-crossing areas which have relapsed into barren desert; they are particularly noticeable from the air. But whereas in Egypt the British occupation laid the foundations of a huge modern system of irrigation and flood control which has already brought the bulk of the land under cultivation, Iraq is really only just beginning. There are some ambitious projects, some of which, such as the dam at Bekhme on the Greater Zab, are already completed, whilst others, particularly the impressive Wadi Thartar flood-control scheme above Baghdad on the Tigris, are still in the planning stage. Iraq, however, is a relatively well-watered country, and drainage and the prevention of the 'salting up' of the land is as great a problem as the actual irrigation. Another great need if agricultural production is to be increased is the modernization of methods and equipment. Areas in Iraq are large and in recent years the Government have sought to introduce mechanical ploughing. After the war the Ministry of Agriculture, advised by British experts, purchased a large number of tractors which were operated and maintained by the State and hired out to farmers. This scheme had promising beginnings, despite difficulties of maintenance and certain favouritism in the allocation of tractors, and slowly the lesson is being learned and more and more individual farmers are seeking to acquire agricultural machinery to supplement the extraordinary primitive implements still generally used. Tribal life is still widespread in Iraq and its ties remain strong. The sheikh, far more than the Government or its representative, is the all important figure, most particularly amongst the nomads who form a high percentage of the population; but the drift towards the towns,

a grave problem throughout the Middle East, is causing some anxiety in Iraq. Despite the difficulties of earning a living and the appalling living conditions in the slums of Baghdad, Basra, and other large towns, the young men from the tribal areas or the settled countryside rarely return to the fold after having tasted the doubtful joys of city life, with its cinemas and its cafés.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Iraq is second only to Egypt in the hierarchy of the Middle East states and it considers itself in many ways the leading 'Arab' country, Egypt being envied its wealth and its power but faintly despised as being not really Arab at all. Successive governments, whether or not Nuri Pasha has been Prime Minister or Minister of Foreign Affairs, have given full support to the Arab League, despite a certain bitterness at what is considered Egypt's appropriation of the League. The establishment of the League's headquarters in Cairo, the fact that the personnel of the Secretariat is almost entirely Egyptian and the all-powerful Secretary-General is Abdel Rahman Azzam Pasha, an Egyptian, arouses feelings of very considerable jealousy in Baghdad. Whilst Nuri Pasha was not possibly in direct competition with Azzam Pasha for the post of Secretary-General, it is certain that he resents the predominant position in League affairs that Azzam Pasha has gained: to all intents and purposes Azzam is the Arab League, and he has certainly been entirely instrumental in keeping it alive. Common antagonism to the Jewish National Home in Palestine and the immigration there of tens of thousands of European Jews in the period between the end of World War II and the outbreak of the Palestine war enabled Egypt and Iraq to present a joint front, but already there was a tendency for two distinct blocs to form within the Arab League. The two Hashimite countries of Iraq and Jordan worked in close contact and were often in opposition to the Egypt-Saudi Arabia-Syrian combine, with the Lebanon sitting gaily on the touchline ready to mediate between the rival factions. Despite their family ties there was, however, a certain rivalry between Iraq and Jordan, mainly because it was always felt in Baghdad that the late King Abdullah wished to bring about the unity of the two countries, either on their own or as part of his cherished Greater Syria plan, under his sovereignty. Nuri Pasha

himself, who was by no means adverse to the Greater Syria or even Fertile Crescent scheme (which would unite Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and the Lebanon) and who was a friend and admirer of King Abdullah, would never have consented to the total setting aside of the boy king of Iraq, Faisal II, still a schoolboy, but was at times believed to have favoured a plan for King Abdullah to head the union during his lifetime but to appoint King Faisal as his successor. The dangers of such a plan are apparent and it is unlikely that in the long run either Nuri, or the Regent of Iraq, or any of the country's statesmen would have accepted it. Despite all this, Iraq and Jordan remained better friends than any of the other Arab countries.

Iraq's relations with Syria were generally strained, although here, too, the Palestine war achieved a temporary rapprochement. Iraq, again at Nuri Pasha's instigation, tried hard to bring about an Iraqi-Syrian union and although this met with a certain amount of support from some of the Syrian tribes, it was strongly opposed by Syrian merchants, politicians, and army officers, all of whom saw themselves playing second fiddle to their stronger Iraqi brethren. The two peoples do not mix as much as their geographical position might lead one to expect, for although they are neighbours, the barren Syrian desert forms an effective barrier. The northern Syrians who live around Aleppo and who are often hostile to the Damascus Government are more friendly to the Iraqis than are the inhabitants of the southern areas. This is because the traditional route from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf was always through Aleppo and the valley of the Euphrates where in many districts an intermingling of the two peoples has produced an entirely different outlook. Basically, of course, the modern Iraqi and Syrian are of exactly the same stock, although the comparative remoteness of Iraq cuts off the Iraqi from the other Arab countries and places Baghdad rather on the outer circle of the Arab world, with Cairo, Amman, Damascus, and Beirut on the inside.

Iraq has on the whole managed to maintain friendly if remote relations with her Moslem neighbour to the east, Persia. They are linked up, to some extent, by the infrequently mentioned Saadabad Pact, which was signed by Persia, Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan at Teheran in July 1937 and automatically extended for another five years in December 1942. The signatories merely pledged themselves

not to interfere in each other's internal affairs and outlawed aggression. Persians in large numbers used to cross the southern frontier to obtain work in the docks or on the railway installations at Basra, where they found better employment than in their own ill-run poverty-stricken country. But Communist agitators from Persia's banned Tudeh Party were responsible for a sharp increase in labour troubles in Iraq and a previous almost wide-open frontier was closed and it became necessary, and was made extremely difficult, to obtain visas to cross it.

There has always been a certain amount of Communist activity in Iraq. The Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with Iraq during the short régime of the pro-German Rashid Ali and maintains a diplomatic mission in Baghdad. During the war the Soviet Legation housed also a large military mission. The Kurds, who, anyway, needed but little encouragement, have been used by Communist agents as the chief source of trouble, but there have also been small-scale attempts to create difficulties amongst the Iraq Petroleum Company's workers at Kirkuk, where there is a mixed Arab and Kurdish labour force. Ordinary labour disputes were easy to organize and when these failed there was the anti-British, anti-imperialist line to play.

So far as Iraq's other neighbours are concerned, relations with Turkey, with whom Iraq had a lengthy dispute after World War I concerning the future of the Mosul area which was not settled until 1932, have never been particularly close, owing to Turkish reluctance once again to become involved in the Middle East, but Nuri Pasha made several attempts to improve relationships.

ANGLO-IRAQI RELATIONS

At the end of the first world war, despite a superficial friendliness on the part of some Iraqi politicians and senior officials, anti-British feeling was widespread. This in reality dated back to the end of the 1914-1918 war when the Arabs who had believed that their part in the Allied war effort would be not only their liberation from the Turks but also their independence, were deceived to find themselves under a new, even if a benevolent, domination. The British Mandate was deeply resented by a people who believed themselves as well fitted for independence as some of the other countries which had formed

part of the Ottoman Empire and which had become sovereign states. This resentment smouldered always below the surface, breaking through from time to time in the form of minor rebellions against authority. It also turned the minds of the educated Iraqi flatly against the benefits which their country derived from its association with Britain and made the 1930 Treaty entirely suspect. This new agreement was presented by informed Iraqi opinion—in which one must include a far from informed Press—as only a façade of independence, granting the King and Government the trappings of power but leaving control of the country firmly in British hands. There was probably a sincerely felt distrust of a power which supported ‘self determination’ for various other peoples of which the average Iraqi had heard but vaguely—Czechs, Serbs, Poles, etc.—but insisted on retaining military bases in his country. The less educated the Iraqi the more inclined he was to follow nationalist leadership and attribute every ill which befell him to the British. Thus, while the politician held the British responsible for a series of political crises which ended in the suppression of political parties, the farmer would blame them for bad crops, the city clerk for an appallingly hot summer and the gharry driver for his horse’s mysterious sickness—probably brought about in fact by continued undernourishment. It was surprising even to those people who had lived for many years in Arab countries that mistrust of the British had penetrated so deeply into all strata of Iraqi society and that every British intention was misunderstood, every action misinterpreted.

While there seems no one main cause for this deep and bitter dislike—on the whole a little too subtle for the European fully to understand—British prestige was certainly harmed by what can only be termed ‘the wrong kind of Englishman for dealings with the Arab peoples’. The bearing and behaviour of some of the British officers who were stationed in Iraq in the two world wars did not pass unnoticed by the curiously observant Iraqi. Over a long period the Englishman in the East, Middle or Far, had, whatever his other faults, built up a reputation for complete honesty and truthfulness: in the hackneyed phrase, an Englishman’s word was his bond. There appeared suddenly Englishmen who did not live up to that high tradition, who told half-truths, who went back on their word. British officers engaged in what one has since learned to term ‘Black market’

dealings ; and although the Iraqi might himself benefit from the same operation without, if one may say so, thinking any the less of himself (rather the contrary perhaps), he quickly loses his respect for the British party to the bargain. Then, between the wars there was also a deterioration in the standard of the British businessman, whether resident or visitor, which did not help in maintaining good relations. This may, to some slight extent, have been the fault of the British Embassy, which retained the pre-1914 attitude to 'commercial gentry'—unless they happened to be very important. The Embassy held aloof from the commercial community and neither assisted them particularly nor sought to guide them. In fact at times relations between the average diplomatic representative and members of the British business community were frankly bad. Clearly the fault was on both sides but the result was another slight but real blow to British prestige in a part of the world where prestige is of tremendous importance. It should not be inferred that all members of the British community in Iraq fell below the high standards of former times : there were a number of men of the highest reputation and integrity who did a great deal to maintain the carefully established British traditions and who themselves retained the friendship and respect of the people of Iraq.

As time went on the Jewish question became a rallying point for anti-British propaganda, much of which was as blatantly untrue as nationalist propaganda so often is. Despite this new aspect of anti-British feeling, or indeed possibly because of it, the Iraq Government decided in 1947 to follow the Egyptian example and seek a revision of their treaty with Britain. The official Iraqi reason was that the 'assistance' they gave the Allied cause during the war had earned them a more favourable status. The British Government signified their readiness to discuss a revision of the treaty when the matter was formally brought up by Saleh Jabr, who had just become Iraq's first Shi'a Prime Minister and negotiations opened, unfortunately in conditions of rather unnecessary secrecy, in the British Embassy at Baghdad. It was apparently the contention of the British authorities and the Iraqi Prime Minister that the fewer people who knew about the negotiations, the better chance they had of success. In certain respects this opinion was probably sound : a hostile Press might well have created an atmosphere which would have rendered reasonable

negotiations out of the question. But secrecy seems to have been carried too far ; not even senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs knew what was going on, and the general belief was that preliminary, exploratory talks were in progress.

Whilst these treaty negotiations were taking place, from March to December 1947, British troops were being withdrawn from Iraq, some to be moved to Palestine, where they were urgently needed to assist in maintaining order. By January 1948 only the two R.A.F. units at Habbaniya and Shaiba remained of the ' British occupation forces '. Quite suddenly, with no attempt to prepare public opinion, the Prime Minister announced that he, the Foreign Minister, Fadil al Jamali, and the Defence Minister, Shakir al Wadi, would leave for England to sign a new treaty. Nuri Pasha es Said would accompany the delegation in his capacity of President of the Senate. As the actual negotiations had in fact been completed in Baghdad, there was nothing for the Iraqi delegation to do but travel down to Portsmouth, with considerable pomp and ceremony, and append their signatures to the treaty. Baghdad was shocked to the core. To the Arab mind, which regards preliminary haggling as not only an absolute necessity but, in many ways, as the best and certainly the most enjoyable part of any transaction, the indecent haste with which their representatives had appeared to conclude the negotiations meant only one thing : they had, for reasons of their own, signed away Iraq's national rights : at the very least they had been outwitted and deceived by the crafty British. Even if there had not been—as there were—certain circumstances quite outside Anglo-Iraqi relations which made the time unpropitious for a new treaty, the sudden announcement and the even more rapid completion of the negotiations followed by the signature of a treaty of which Iraq knew absolutely nothing at all would have doomed it before the ink was dry. As it was, Iraqi public opinion was in an even more than usually excited and aggressive mood because of events in Palestine, for which Britain was receiving the blame. In addition, internal conditions were wretched. A poor harvest combined with blatant hoarding and speculating in wheat—about which the Government did nothing—had led to a shortage of bread, which is the poorer Iraqi's staple food. And, as usual, the British were made the scapegoats for something with which they had not the remotest connexion.

Muddle-headed but none the less serious rioting broke out in Baghdad, with youthful demonstrators shouting against the British and the treaty while at their sides ran ragged men and women waving mouldy crusts of bread. Even with this warning before them, neither the Iraqi Government nor the British Embassy—staffed at the moment by a far from well First Secretary and a few junior officials—took adequate steps to repair the earlier mistakes. Saleh Jabr, instead of hurrying back to Baghdad, remained in London while his wife underwent an operation, and no arrangements were made either to inform the other members of the Iraqi Cabinet, who were still in complete ignorance of the terms of the new treaty, or to have an official transcription of the document published. At once the Press jumped in and ‘revealed’ a whole hodge-podge of military clauses and secret clauses and the entire gamut of nationalist inventions designed to prove that once again the perfidious British had hoodwinked the Iraqis and, on the pretext of negotiating a more equitable treaty, had in fact reinforced their domination of the luckless country. The rioting continued, if on a somewhat smaller scale, and threatened to spread to the provinces: there were in fact minor demonstrations in Basra, Mosul, and elsewhere. The most serious threat, however, came from the Army which appeared for a time ready to come out on the side of the rioters, when the police would have been powerless to cope with the situation and the country might have lapsed willy-nilly into anarchy.

When the news of the signing of the treaty had first been flashed to Iraq, the Emir Abdul Ilah had issued a statement welcoming it and praising the Iraqi negotiators for their work. As the Press campaign increased in violence efforts were made by the First Secretary of the British Embassy, the senior British representative in Iraq at the time, and by individual Englishmen in the Regent’s confidence, to persuade him reaffirm his belief in the new treaty and to try to calm down the over-excited population. But the Regent, by nature a somewhat timorous man, had been the target for vicious newspaper attacks, both as a ‘British stooge’ and on grounds of personal extravagance in relation to a new palace he was having built, ostensibly for his nephew, the young King, and he repudiated the treaty. In conjunction with the Deputy Leader of the Government and other political leaders he caused a statement to be issued to the effect that it had been ‘unanimously decided’ that the new treaty failed to ‘realize

Iraq's national aspirations' nor did it assure the country's rights. At the same time the British Foreign Secretary, who had clearly been almost ludicrously ill-informed of events and popular feeling in Iraq, declared in the Commons that he hoped the treaty would serve as a model for similar agreements with other Arab countries. He added that there had been 'some misunderstanding in Baghdad' which he was sure the Iraqi Prime Minister would speedily clear up upon his return. Mr. Bevin had clearly either not read the British newspapers or had refused to believe the quite adequate accounts of events in Iraq which were then published. The combination of these new statements, the Government's utter failure to do anything to meet the bread crisis and the absence of any relief measures led to further rioting, in which over thirty people were killed. The Prime Minister courageously returned to face overwhelming unpopularity. His broadcast on the actual terms and benefits of the treaty made no impression and as the disorder showed no signs of abating, Saleh Jabr resigned and took refuge with his tribal relatives.

The new treaty was reasonable. It followed the general pattern of the 1930 Treaty it was supposed to replace, but various clauses which were thought to impinge on Iraqi sovereignty were deleted. The British air bases at Habbaniya and Shaiba—well off the beaten track, well away from the sight of most Iraqis—were to be retained as operational bases of the R.A.F. until peace treaties with all former enemy powers had been signed and afterwards be maintained by British technical staff. A Joint Anglo-Iraqi Defence Board was to be established for consultations on defence and could, in case of need, invite British forces to return to the country. Britain undertook to supply and equip the Iraqi Army and to furnish a military mission for its training. There were mutual agreements on the facilities to be granted to aircraft, civil and military, in each country. Whether or not this treaty would have been acceptable to Iraq had not its negotiation been so ineptly handled is a question to which no reliable answer can be given. Probably Nuri Pasha would have managed to get it through, but for reasons of his own he preferred to retire to the background and allow an inexperienced Shi'ia Prime Minister to handle the matter. It was unfortunate also that for the important months leading to the completion of the negotiations, there was no British Ambassador in Baghdad. One appointee was prevented by ill health

from taking up his post and the new Ambassador nominated to succeed him arrived in Baghdad a few days after the riots. It was by then too late for anything to be done and the new Prime Minister, a respected old gentleman named Mohammed Sadr formally denounced and rejected the Portsmouth instrument.

After the excitement over the Portsmouth Treaty had died down, the Palestine question again became the outstanding issue in Iraq. Agents of the Arab League arrived in Baghdad about this time to try and raise recruits for the Arab Army of Liberation which was being sent in secretly to northern Palestine to be ready to fight the Jews directly the Mandate came to an end. Between two thousand and three thousand Iraqis volunteered ; many of them were unemployed who would do anything and go anywhere for a job and who were, as so many of the Arab volunteers, attracted by the possibility of loot. Others were the ringleaders in the recent anti-British disturbances, young firebrands already deeply imbued with strong nationalist and anti-British anti-Jewish feeling. Whatever may have been the stuff of which the Iraqi volunteers were made, there was no mistaking the genuine, deeply felt and widespread anti-Zionism which permeated Iraq. By nature fierce, excitable, and aggressive, the Iraqis have always been ready to oppose almost anything, or anybody. Palestine was for them a magnificent outlet for their feelings and enthusiasm for the ' holy war ' they were going to wage was everywhere manifest. The volunteer army, which included detachments of Iraqi girls who, with some slight smattering of medical training, were going into Palestine as nurses (and that was an enormously progressive step in Iraq where the emancipation of women had hardly begun), staged periodic marches through crowded, flag-bedecked streets and brought already high public enthusiasm to boiling point. It was curious, though, that whilst the British were frequently blamed for permitting the growth of Zionism and for being responsible for the heavy influx of European Jews into Palestine, there is no recorded instance of any British resident of or visitor to Iraq being even molested during this period of effervescence. The author went about Baghdad and Basra on foot, in gharry or in taxi during these weeks, becoming, sometimes, inextricably mixed up with large anti-Jewish and anti-British demonstrations without ever being treated with anything but the utmost kindness and courtesy.

The Government followed rather than led public opinion, and not even the influence of Nuri Pasha, who was at this time playing his alternative rôle to the man at the helm, the man behind the scenes, could have moderated the verbal violence of the attacks on Britain, had he wanted to, which is not certain. Shrewd politician, Nuri Pasha seems always to have realized that Iraq needs the friendship and support of Britain, but he was also shrewd enough to appreciate the folly and indeed the uselessness of going against the current of public opinion on the Palestine issue. In addition, there is every reason to believe that he felt as strongly as his brother Arabs everywhere at the march of events in Palestine. Incidents such as the occupation of Haifa, the expulsion of the Arabs from Jaffa and other towns, and the failure of the Mandatory Power to maintain order during the bitter closing stages of the Mandate affected Nuri as much as they did any other Arab leader. Half-hearted excuses that against American interference and assistance for the Zionists Britain was powerless produced only the impression that Britain was no longer a great power worthy of respect.

Although the British in Iraq had no cause to fear physical violence, Iraqi officials commenced a campaign of more or less polite obstructionism which was infuriating, but which was to continue long after the Palestine war had come to an end. Entry visas became difficult to obtain and once in, the necessary exit visa was often delayed so long that aircraft were missed. A fatuous censorship was imposed on telegrams and letters : foreign newspapers were delayed, cut or just lost. There are in ordinary times only four real working days in Iraq, where the Moslems observed the Friday holiday, Jews their Sabbath on Saturday, and Christians Sunday, in addition to the multiple religious festivals which meant the closing down of the whole country for several successive days. These were normal, but in abnormal times could be made a magnificent excuse for quite inordinate delays. And as the Palestine war drew near, excitement and preparation increased.

There is some reason to believe that Communist agents played a certain part in the instigation of the disorders which effectively killed the Portsmouth Treaty. About this time a number of new newspapers—usually cheap little sheets—appeared in Baghdad. They contained little news but a great deal of anti-British propaganda,

and appeared to have been edited by men with little or no journalistic experience. After the new treaty had been rejected, most of them ceased publication. Whoever was running them, it is fairly certain that the money behind them came from Soviet sources, which also provided the volatile Baghdad mob with well-made banners and the other trappings of a Middle Eastern demonstration. In fact, from the Russian point of view, this was a deplorable waste of money, time, and effort, for the rejection of the new draft meant only that the existent 1930 Treaty, perfectly satisfactory to England, remained in force. True, the fact that the Iraqis had, of their own volition, as it seemed, administered a striking rebuff to Britain had a certain value in the Middle East generally as a further blow to British prestige. But, on practical terms, it is probable that the British Government were quite satisfied to have their relations with Iraq regulated by the eighteen-year-old agreement.

One result of the failure of the negotiations was that the British Military Mission, which had been doing good work in training the Iraqi Army, was withdrawn. For public consumption, the General in charge issued a declaration to the effect that his task was completed. Privately the Iraqi made it clear that the Mission was no longer welcome. The Iraqi Army was in fact secretly preparing for the war in Palestine and it was felt that the presence of British officers in their country might cramp their style.

Iraq's closest friend in the outwardly-united internally-divided Middle East has always been her sister-Hashemite neighbour, Jordan, whose ruler, King Abdullah, was a brother of Iraq's first king, Faisal, and uncle of the present boy-king, Faisal II.

CHAPTER VI

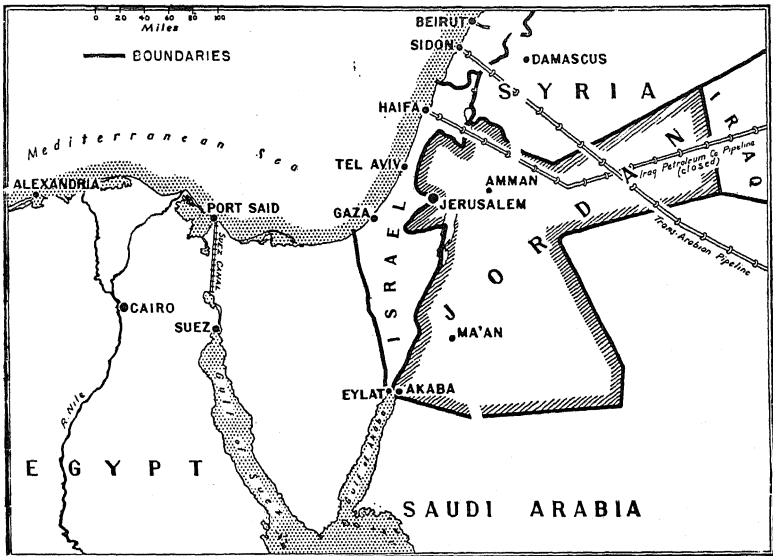
JORDAN

MORE completely than any other of the Middle Eastern countries, Transjordan, or the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan as it is now called, was identified with the person of its ruler. King Abdullah *was* Jordan : in its early days, and it existed only since the end of World War I, it was little more than a large triangular-shaped expanse of desert surrounding a shrewd, dignified, ambitious but somewhat wayward little man. Helped by a small band of British officers and officials, and considerable grants-in-aid from a benevolent but in no way disinterested British Government, Jordan gradually grew up, but it remained King Abdullah's little kingdom until the end of the British Mandate in Palestine. Then, for reasons which will be examined later in this book, both its territory and its population swelled considerably. What effect the brutal assassination of the old King will have upon Jordan's future it is still too early to judge, but without him it can never be the same charming, infuriating country.

Jordan is the only country of the Middle East that has remained consistently loyal and friendly to England. That was entirely Abdullah's doing, and although it was, from his point of view, certainly a matter of expediency and sound common sense, the course he charted and unhesitatingly adhered to was also plotted from conviction. Carved almost arbitrarily out of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, more, really, to give Abdullah a kingdom as a reward for his services during the 1914-1918 war than anything else, Jordan was entirely dependent upon Britain. Under the nominal jurisdiction of the High Commissioner for Palestine, the Emir Abdullah, as he remained until his country obtained its full independence, enjoyed from the beginning considerable freedom in his very personal rule of his three hundred thousand subjects. The British Resident in Amman, the capital city, was the Emir's principal British adviser outside the Commander of the Arab Legion. After 1938 a Council of Ministers came slowly into being, and they referred all

major decisions on the budget and foreign relations to the British adviser. The most efficient members of the administration were several Palestinian Arabs who, having found advancement none too easy in their home towns, had moved to Amman, where a little clerical experience and the ability to read and write ensured them rapid promotion.

Amman is built on the site of the Biblical Rabbath-Amman and Graeco-Roman city of Philadelphia, and until quite recently



MAP V: JORDAN

gave the impression of being a mere Beduin camp made permanent only by stone and corrugated iron. At the crossing-point of all major caravan routes in Jordan, it was the main market-place for the tribes, who every Monday and Thursday drove thousands of camels to the famous camel market, and, on other days, goats, sheep and Arab horses. The Beduin bought material for their clothes, food, and harness with the money they earned from the sale of livestock. In the large central cafés they drank coffee and exchanged gossip. There were no buildings of note, and the dust of the streets was not too often disturbed by the passing of cars, although a regular bus

service between some of the more important villages was gradually developed, made possible by the country's two excellent, British-planned, main roads—one from Allenby Bridge, Palestine, to Amman, and a second running across the north of the country and connecting the port of Haifa in Palestine with the capital of Iraq, Baghdad. This latter road runs through Jordan parallel with the Iraq Petroleum Company's pipe-line.

The late Emir Abdullah had no particular love for his capital, which he had always regarded as a temporary stopping-place on the road to Damascus. He arrived in Amman from the Hijaz in 1921 with the sole object of attacking the French in Syria and thus assisting his brother Faisal, later King of Iraq, who had been deposed by them. Mr. Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, was at the time on a visit to Jerusalem. He persuaded the Emir to abandon this plan and remain in Transjordan as temporary ruler.

The Emir Abdullah was of the Moslem aristocracy, as he was born in Mecca, a descendant of one of the holiest families in Islam, and educated in the beautiful city of Constantinople, where later he sat in the Ottoman Parliament as member for the Hijaz. One of his favourite parlour tricks was to speak Turkish like an Arab and Arabic like a Turk. He had the virtues and some of the vices of an important tribal leader. He lived exceedingly simply, observed always the traditional rites of Beduin hospitality, was, according to the same precepts, rigorously honest, but was a tenacious and vengeful enemy. He was the most accessible of Middle Eastern rulers—from five to seven in the morning, when he received the most humble of his subjects together with visiting Arab dignitaries and any foreigner who wished to meet him. In winter he would sit at a small, cheap desk in a bare whitewashed room; in summer he had beautiful rugs spread on the ground in front of his ramshackle palace and there he would hold court, leaning against a richly ornamented camel saddle. In some directions he was extravagant and, helped by his three wives, particularly the youngest, his favourite, who was commonly called the 'Black Queen', he frequently over-spent his grant-in-aid, which, never less than £1,000,000 a year, was not over large, particularly as the bulk of it went direct to the Arab Legion. Possibly because there was not much hard cash available, the activities of some of the Emir's family were not always above reproach. Soon

after the end of the second world war there were more than fifty brand new American cars in the royal garage : where they all came from no one ever seemed to know. They were frequently used by members of the Emir's family for a profitable trade in contraband goods which, purchased in Jordan with dollars of which there was a mysterious influx during the war, were smuggled into Palestine, where there was a ready market. The actual smuggling operation was ludicrously simple, as the cars, bearing a large gilt crown, were ushered rapidly through all the Palestine frontier controls—until the day when one of them overturned and disgorged a quite fantastic cargo of American cigarettes, nylon stockings, face creams, powder and lipsticks. After that the royal cars, crown or no crown, were subjected to the usual inspection. When the Emir was told of these activities he forbade certain members of his family the use of his cars—but he laughed heartily. After all, smuggling had been a recognized source of income for residents of Jordan since the Nabataeans operated from Petra.

In many ways the Emir Abdullah was a conservative, a result, possibly, of the strict orthodoxy of the atmosphere in which he grew up. He followed faithfully the tenets of the Islamic religion—unlike most of the Moslem leaders of the Middle East who, whatever their attitude in public, are often lax in private. Abdullah neither smoked nor drank alcohol in any form, and he would allow no one to do so in his presence, not even distinguished European visitors. He observed the Ramadan fast. He insisted that all Moslem women should continue to wear veils, even at a time when, amongst the upper classes at least, the practice of wearing Western clothes was spreading rapidly, and he would stop his car if he saw an unveiled woman, administer a magisterial rebuke, and send her home. He was known to admonish even European women for their immodest dress. At the same time he was a most humane and even a somewhat childish little man, extremely fond of telling intricate Arabic stories, quoting from recondite Arabic authors, and capping anyone else's quotation. After a successful sally he would bounce up and down on his seat in pleasure. When displeased—when, for example, one of his British advisers turned down one of his far-fetched projects—he would give a magnificent performance of a man losing his temper, muttering and growling with rage, sometimes stamping his feet and throwing things

about. But his tantrums usually ended with a joke and an Abdullah twinkle. He was an excellent chess player and was particularly formidable at his own invention—Atomic chess.

The British Mandate for Palestine formally excluded the whole area of Jordan from the Jewish National Home, and the Emir generally refused to allow Jews even to set foot in his country, though he was in touch with Zionist leaders at various times. He was always afraid that enterprising Zionists would cast covetous eyes at the wide open spaces of his extremely under-populated country and try to buy land there. Jordan, however, was greatly dependent upon Palestine, for the bulk of its imports had to come through the port of Haifa, and whatever produce it had to sell found markets in Palestine. The port of Akaba had not been developed, and anyhow was poorly supplied with roads joining it with the rest of the country. The easiest route to Amman, which in pre-war days received a number of tourists who would use it as a base for expeditions to Petra, Jerash, etc., was from Palestine, through Jericho and the Jordan Valley and up the lovely winding road through the mountains of Moab. Economically, Jordan was bound up with Palestine, used Palestine currency and formed part of the sterling area. The war brought an enormous boom to the country. The Allies spent there but a small fraction of the enormous sums disbursed in Egypt and Iraq, and, to a lesser extent, Palestine, but, comparatively, contractors and merchants flourished as never before, and the narrow *souks* of Amman were filled with a greater profusion of goods than had ever been seen in Jordan. Heaped up in tiny single-roomed, open-fronted shops were a quite fantastic assortment of goods from all over the world—America leading by a long way. They included the latest beauty preparations, lipsticks, face creams and powders, perfume, nylon stockings and underwear, tons and tons of cigarette papers, scores of shiny top-hats, intricate electrical appliances from irons to outboard motors, passing through washing-machines and refrigerators, obscure liqueurs from various European countries, millions of boxes of good Swedish safety-matches, and, at one time, more tooth-brushes than the Middle East could use in a year—goods which, for the most part, could not have been less readily saleable to the somewhat primitive inhabitants of the Jordanian deserts who were the regular customers of the Amman market. That they were nearly all readily disposed

of—except the top-hats which, after being touted round the entire Middle East, mysteriously disappeared—shows that, when it is worth while to both sides, Jewish-Arab co-operation is easily arranged. Troops on leave delightedly bought articles in Amman that were to be found nowhere else in the Middle East, but the bulk of the goods were smuggled into Palestine. In fact that was what they were imported for in the first place.

The war restricted, but by no means brought to an end, the large flow of 'gift dollars' from sympathisers in the United States for friends and relatives in Palestine. But an unsympathetic British Treasury confiscated these dollars and made available to Jewish recipients equivalent sums in sterling. Strenuous objection by the Jewish Agency led to an agreement that some of the dollars could be used for the purchase in the United States, 'on humanitarian grounds', of certain categories of goods for import into Palestine—drugs, pharmaceutical supplies, etc., mostly—which were in short supply in the Middle East. Gradually, however, a major trade in all kinds of luxury articles (luxury on wartime standards) was built up by close co-operation between Jewish importers in Tel Aviv and Arab merchants in Amman. Notified by an agent in the United States that so many 'gift dollars' were standing to his credit, a Jewish importer would order what goods he wanted and, by the help of false documents, have them shipped to an Arab merchant in Jordan, where import licences were easy to obtain and controls were not strict. He would then credit the account of the Arab merchant in a Haifa or Jaffa bank, the goods would eventually arrive in Amman, and would be carted down to the banks of the Jordan River in the dead of night and easily taken across into Palestine. The mass of stuff exhibited for sale in the Amman *souks* was composed either of goods awaiting a favourable moment for transfer to Palestine or a residue for which arrangements had been faulty.

This almost open traffic in forbidden imports and these open breaches of wartime currency and trading regulations show more than the possibilities of Arab-Jewish co-operation: they prove the lightness of British interference in the internal affairs of Jordan. The Emir Abdullah's country was entirely dependent upon British support, financial and political; it was also a link in the carefully nurtured economy of the Middle East, organized and controlled at great

expense of money, trouble and manpower by the Middle East Supply Centre in Cairo. And yet neither the British advisers who were at that time serving in the Jordanian administration, nor the British diplomatic mission, nor even the Allied service chiefs, did anything or, so far as one is aware, said anything about what amounted to an enormous open black market. The British 'yoke' rested extremely lightly upon Jordan. It was not, and, anyway within any foreseeable future, cannot be a viable state. The country's economy might have sufficed to meet the demands of a large tribal area. But the merchants and the upper classes have developed tastes which the meagre exports of a nomadic people, living on their herds and whatever crops a mainly barren and waterless country can produce, can never sustain. The ruler's power depends upon the British-officered and British-paid Arab Legion, a small but extremely efficient force developed by two notable Englishmen, first Peake Pasha and then Glubb Pasha, out of illiterate untrained Beduin. They have been taught not only to be smart disciplined soldiers, but also to drive and maintain armoured vehicles, use wireless sets, and perform all the intricate duties of a modern mobile force. The Legion is, in fact, a lasting tribute to the inherently soldierly qualities of the uncontaminated desert Arab when properly trained and led by Anglo-Saxons. The difference between Jordan's Arab Legion and the troops of Egypt and Syria, for example, who are officered by their own people, is quite remarkable. The shabby old building on a little hill outside Amman, which is now Glubb Pasha's headquarters, is always surrounded by a crowd of desert Beduin anxious to join the Legion. It is, like the Emir's Palace, open to all, and Glubb Pasha is always accessible: it is one of the sources of his enormous influence in Jordan.

The Emir Abdullah's relations with his Arab neighbours were never more than lukewarm. Saudi Arabia, from which the Hashimite family were forcibly expelled by King Ibn Saud, was definitely an enemy. Abdullah always maintained that he had a hereditary right to the Hijaz, while Ibn Saud, for his part, never relinquished claims to Aqaba and Ma'an. There was great jealousy between these two Arab rulers, and Abdullah usually spoke contemptuously, and possibly a little enviously, of Ibn Saud as 'that oil merchant'. Jordan's relations with Egypt, before the Palestine war, were just about cordial on the surface. There was already growing that jealousy between

the two royal houses which has since become one of the most important factors in Middle East relationships, and, at heart, the Emir despised the Egyptians as poor and godless Moslems. Iraq, another Hashimite country, was friendly enough, but between Jordan and Syria there was never anything but deep distrust. The Syrians were only too well aware that the Emir regarded Damascus as his spiritual capital and Syria as a rightful part of his domains.

JORDAN ACHIEVES ITS INDEPENDENCE

As the war drew to an end the British Government, able once again to pay attention to the internal problems of the Middle East, turned its attention to the future of the Emir Abdullah's territory. Jordan had always been specifically excluded from that part of Palestine in which a Jewish National Home might be established, and now Britain felt that it should be declared an independent sovereign state and should sever its connexions with the Government of Palestine. In 1946 the Emir and his Prime Minister, Ibrahim Pasha Hashim, went to London where they signed a Treaty of Alliance for a period of twenty-five years. This recognized Jordan as an independent state with the Emir Abdullah as its sovereign. There was provision for British experts and technicians to assist the Jordanian Government and the possibility of a commercial treaty to be concluded as soon as possible. The Treaty also provided for British forces to be stationed at Amman and Mafrak and 'in such other places as may be agreed upon'. The few Jordanians who could read were not, however, too happy when they studied the text of the preamble, published with some prominence in the Cairo newspapers which reach Amman the same day. This declared that there would be 'full and frank consultation between Great Britain and Transjordan in all matters of foreign policy which might affect their common interests'. The Egyptian interpretation of this clause was that 'Abdullah is selling part of his country's national aspirations in order to become a King'.

Soon after his return from London the Emir Abdullah was proclaimed King at a ceremony which was almost as fantastic as had been the famous coronation of Haile Selassie in the far-off days before the war, but in which the leading actor was again outstanding for his quiet dignity and simplicity. Car-loads of British officers and

officials and very mixed newspaper correspondents drove up from Jerusalem: Beduin chiefs flocked in from all over Jordan and also from the neighbouring countries; the Middle East states sent impressive delegations of dignitaries, and half the population of Jordan filled the narrow winding streets of Amman, where large American limousines, British Army vehicles, herds of frightened camels and bad-tempered donkeys produced traffic jams which for their intricacy have probably never been equalled. Such was the confusion that many of the more distinguished guests were unable to reach the Palace in time for the ceremony. This was followed by a military review in which the Arab Legion, from armoured cars to camel patrols, created an excellent impression and was indeed something of a shock to the superior westernized Egyptians and to the Syrians and Saudi Arabians, for both of whom, although in different ways, Jordan's military strength was a matter of concern.

The British Resident, Mr. A. S. Kirkbride, became British Minister, and continued, under another title, connexions with Transjordan which had opened twenty-five years before when, after the close of the first world war, he remained on as a British Political Officer. The Minister, now Sir Alec Kirkbride, certainly knows Jordan better than any other Englishman, better even than Glubb Pasha. He speaks perfect Arabic and Turkish and was a close personal friend of King Abdullah's, who trusted him absolutely. He undoubtedly had great influence, so that, when the King was being 'difficult', as he was, increasingly, in the years following the achievement of independence, the Minister was able to make him see reason. But, as time went by, the Minister seemed to become more and more remote and less inclined to take any interest in or action on behalf of the less important British interests. Certain British officials and advisers were treated most shabbily by the Jordanian Government but received no support whatsoever from the British Legation; in a country where the ruler, the Commander of the Arab Legion, and almost every one else of note were all readily accessible to almost any one, only the British Minister was 'not at home'; and at a time when Jordanian representatives were being extremely difficult about the issuing of visas for British subjects to visit their country, which, after all, was entirely dependent upon British support, it was a waste of time to ask for the intervention of Britain's diplomatic representative. Many observers

felt that Jordan, to an even greater degree than other countries of the Middle East, had been granted independence before there existed an administration really capable of running its own affairs. This was to some extent obscured by the personality of the King, who continued right until the day of his assassination to be the effective ruler and government of the country. But many of the extraordinary muddles which developed could have been avoided by a firmer insistence upon Britain's right to 'advise', and greater progress could have been achieved by more open British assistance.

The coronation of King Abdullah, which coincided with a large influx into Palestine of British and American journalists who were sent there because Jewish terrorism was just beginning to attract world attention to the Holy Land, brought Jordan, too, into the news picture. Reporters who had not previously even known where the tiny kingdom was situated began to make frequent visits to Amman, where the King was always delighted to see any foreign visitor. As he was also always ready to make statements on the Palestine problem, and as his statements were frequently indiscreet in the extreme, the Palace officials, working hand in glove with the British Legation, did their best, firstly, to keep journalists away or, failing that, to suppress the King's interviews. Mysterious accidents happened to cables filed at the Amman Post Office, while a censorship which was established around this time and which became one of the worst and most infuriating in the Middle East, mainly because of its abysmal stupidity—few of the officials delegated to perform the thankless task had more than a sketchy knowledge of the English language—saw to it that even signed statements by His Majesty were blue-pencilled. These difficulties, combined with the obstruction of Jordanian representatives in other countries, particularly Palestine, in the matter of granting visas, led an exasperated American journalist to coin the phrase 'Behind the Camel Hair Curtain', applied first to Jordan and later to most of the Arab countries.

The problems facing British advisers in Arab countries are always tricky, and the fact that Jordan is a small, under-developed kingdom made them no easier. The British head of the Antiquities Department, a man of outstanding qualifications, managed to do an excellent job on a ridiculously small amount of money: he had the backing of the King, but obtained little support from the Cabinet Ministers,

who were not particularly interested in the country's great potential wealth of antiquities. His task was easier than that of other Englishmen employed by the Jordan Government—because no Jordanian wanted his job ; there was not sufficient money or possibilities in it. So long as he did not want any money from the Government, he was allowed quite peacefully to make a succession of interesting discoveries. The task of the financial advisers was, however, totally different. The rich merchants objected strongly to paying taxes and loathed the idea of an honest and efficient taxation department. They did not want a straight man who could not be bribed in the key post of director of currency control and foreign exchange. Their choice for the job would be a man who could be either bullied or bribed to make available to them all the exchange they needed for the Cairo, Beirut, British or American markets. Merchants resented the necessity of obtaining import licences and were always ready to complain loudly to Cabinet Ministers and even to the King if their demands for permits to bring in totally unnecessary goods were turned down. In the long run, the merchants won, as it was almost always possible to find a Minister to over-rule the Adviser's edicts, and the British Legation would never interfere.

During the months preceding the end of the British Mandate in Palestine, Jordan was quietly preparing for the war against the Jews. Little was in fact done except to recruit more men for the Legion and to make plans for increasing the supplies of ammunition and weapons. In various interviews and statements King Abdullah spoke happily of the Holy War he would wage and the awful fate which lay in store for the Jewish invaders. But he also fluttered Middle East doves in no mean manner by hints that when he had made his kingdom richer, stronger and larger by absorbing a good part of Palestine, he would then turn his attention to expansion in another direction. From time to time the question of Greater Syria was brought up, causing as much alarm in Syria and fury in Egypt and Saudi Arabia as did the continued immigration of Jews into Palestine. As the Mandate drew to its sorry end, and as fighting between Jews and Arabs in Palestine increased in frequency and severity, Amman began to fill up with upper-class Palestinians, getting out while the going was good and while they could take their money and possessions with them. At the same time the Legion received

large reinforcements, for the Palestine Government disbanded the Transjordanian Frontier Force, a body of trained men, mostly Jordanians, which had been formed at the end of World War I to provide guard companies for duty in Palestine to free British troops for active service and later to assist the hard-pressed Palestine Police. The bulk of them, with their officers, immediately joined the Legion.

But even the approach of the Palestine war did not improve Jordan's relations with northern neighbours, the Levant States, or, in particular, Syria, on which, until the time of his death, King Abdullah cast covetous eyes.

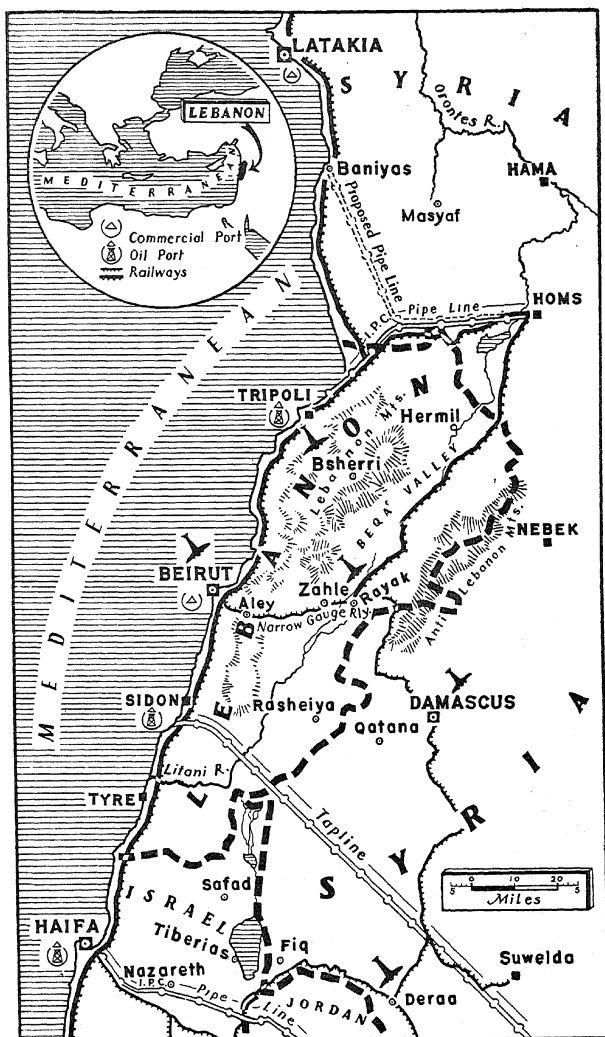
CHAPTER VII

THE LEVANT STATES

THE Lebanon towards the end of the war was the favourite leave-resort of many British and American servicemen in the Middle East. The combined influence of French culture and a Christian majority in the population gave to homesick soldiers an illusion that they were once again in Europe. They could indeed visit restaurants where they ate better food than they could have found in most European countries at that time. This was due not only to the good French cooking in Beirut but also the fact that the chef had everything he needed—eggs, fruit, vegetables, butter, and cheese as well as plenty of meat, fish, and game. Here, too, the French had produced a better quality wine than was made anywhere else in the Middle East, from grapes grown on the sunny but well-watered mountains of the Lebanon.

For the troops there were pleasant leave-camps on the quite magnificent bathing beaches of the Lebanese coast. For the officer there were excellent hotels and clubs with terraces overlooking the lovely bay of Beirut in which the incomparable snow-capped mountain range is reflected in the bluest part of the Eastern Mediterranean. There were good bands, dancing girls, and cool, if sticky, breezes from the sea to temper the summer heat. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers, arriving from the monotonous drab flatness of Cairo or Baghdad, eyeing appreciatively the white table-linen after the grubby cloths of mess or transit-camp, believed the view of Beirut the most beautiful sight they had ever seen. Prices were high because the military authorities were somehow not so successful in controlling the Lebanese tradespeople as they had been elsewhere: not very surprising to anyone who knows the Lebanese. But no one cared very much because everything was so clean and good, the *décor* so exciting and the people so civilized!

There was an air of suppressed excitement everywhere. The rich Lebanese invited officers to their houses to celebrate not only the approaching end of the war but their own independence—the end



MAP VI: THE LEVANT STATES

of the hated French Mandate. The Lebanese claimed that the welcome they gave to British officers was inspired by the help Britain had given to them in their quarrel with the French authorities and the sympathetic attitude of British officials towards their 'national aspirations'.

The Syrians received far less sympathy from the soldier on leave than the Lebanese, perhaps because, although Damascus is a city everyone wishes to visit, few Europeans or Americans enjoy their stay after the first few days. The mosques are magnificent and the covered *souks* (still carefully divided into sections for each trade—one for the gold workers, another for the silver workers, etc.) were and are irresistible. Officers on leave bought quantities of lovely Damascus brocade for their wives, mothers and sisters, or dressing-gowns for themselves. But mosques and *souks* soon pall when there is no other distraction in a city that is hot and dusty in summer and cold and windy in winter; where the best hotels are always crowded, and expensive, and not too comfortable; where good meals are most difficult to obtain, and European amusements not available. The visitor soon longs to return to Beirut over the excellent road built by the French, which crosses two ranges of mountains before descending steeply to the Mediterranean. Damascus is in the centre of an oasis in which the twin rivers eventually lose themselves; it is beautifully cultivated, and many of the buildings are splendid; but despite the French Mandate and its influence, Damascus is fanatically Moslem. At the end of the war a certain number of unveiled women were to be seen in the main street, but these were ladies of fashion and they did not represent the majority.

The Lebanese and the Syrians had both resented the French Mandate from the time it was established after the first world war. They both considered themselves ready for independence. The Blum Government had in fact promised independence, but this had not materialized. The war gave the Levant renewed importance for France, especially after the establishment there of the Vichy régime. Later, when British and Free French units, in what was intended to be a gentle campaign, overthrew the Vichy régime and offered its officers the alternative of returning to France or serving with the Free French, the Levant became important as a symbol of French power and resistance. The French conveniently forgot that General

de Gaulle had, in conjunction with the British Minister of State in Cairo, issued a statement promising the Syrians and the Lebanese full independence subject only to the exigencies of war. Naturally the ruling classes of the Levant States bore this promise uppermost in their minds, and they grew tired of the excuses the French gave for failure to implement their promises. Major-General Sir Edward Spears, who had been chief of the British Military Mission, was appointed the first British Minister to the two countries in February 1942. He was known to have quarrelled with General de Gaulle after having helped him to escape from France. In addition General Spears was an intimate personal friend of Britain's wartime Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and of the British Minister of State in the Middle East, Mr. Richard Casey. There is little doubt that this background encouraged the Syrians and the Lebanese, whose independence, though recognized by Great Britain and some of the Arab States, had not been put into effect because of French opposition. The French had refused to allow either country to hold elections, and governments were set up in Beirut and Damascus composed entirely of pro-French 'Yes-men'. But by 1943 feeling had grown so intense that general elections were held. The results were not surprising, and in both countries the Nationalists won a sweeping majority over the small pro-French elements.

The first action of both Governments was to consider amendments to the Constitution which would enable them to eliminate what French control still remained. This was strongly opposed by the French Resident-General and although the Lebanese, large numbers of whom are Christians, had always seemed more docile than the fiery Moslems of Syria, it was in Beirut that the first major troubles occurred.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LEBANON

The new Lebanese Chamber had elected the Christian Nationalist leader Bishara al Khoury as President of the Republic. He invited one of the leading Moslems, Riad Bey es Solh, to form the Government. Riad Bey included in his Cabinet a representative of each of the major political and religious groups, Christian and Moslem. (This pattern has since become a convention in the Lebanon where, if the President be a Christian, the Prime Minister must be a Moslem

with representatives of the Maronites, the Greek Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, the Catholics, the Druze and the Shi'a Moslems in his Government. If, on the other hand, a Moslem were elected President, the Prime Minister would be a Christian.)

The French authorities, however, considered that the Mandate was still in force, and they issued official statements to that effect. These caused considerable resentment, but it was the marked lack of tact of some of the French officials that provoked the most violent reaction.

The Free French regarded the whole Arab Nationalist movement as anti-French, and felt that if the Mandate was ended the Levant States would immediately become part of an Arab confederacy which they thought Whitehall would encourage after the war.

When the new Prime Minister, Riad Bey, passed a series of amendments to the Constitution which ignored the Mandate, the French High Commissioner arrested nearly all the members of the Cabinet, some in conditions of considerable brutality, and rioting broke out in Beirut. General Spears and the French Délégué-Général sent frantic cables to London, both, it transpired, telling a very different story. But the war was at its height and there was only limited public interest in the British or American newspapers in events in the Lebanon. General Spears then telephoned to Mr. Casey in Cairo to ask him to fly to Beirut and see for himself what was happening. The Minister, who, unknown even to General Spears, was at that time preparing for the Cairo meeting of Churchill, Roosevelt and Chiang Kai Shek, had to delay his visit. But he did send a number of British and American war correspondents in his private 'plane so that there could at least be some objective reports available. The correspondents found a general strike in progress in Beirut; not a shop was open nor was there any accommodation available; trains and trams had ceased to run and there was not a taxi on the streets. Even the famous restaurants and night-clubs had closed their doors. For once the Lebanese were united to a man. But the population was a little apprehensive about French reaction, and in the Moslem parts of the city barricades were hastily erected across the streets to keep out French troops.

Early the next morning the French despatched two light tanks and several Bren carriers to break down the barricades. The officer

in charge of this operation lost his head and used far more force—and made far more noise—than was necessary, even to the extent of firing down empty side-streets where the inhabitants were still asleep. The road-blocks were torn down and several Lebanese were killed and wounded in the fighting. In some curious manner this incident, particularly the excessive firing in many parts of Beirut, seemed to be the last straw, although in comparison with the methods used by the French in putting down some of the between-wars disorders, it was insignificant. There was an almost spontaneous hardening of opinion all over the Lebanon and an agitation for the immediate expulsion of the French. Young Lebanese began to arm themselves—and there were plenty of arms at hand in the Lebanon as well as throughout the Middle East at that time—and the Druze began to mass in the southern hills for a descent upon the French positions. The strike continued and tension increased.

At this point the French military authorities committed a further blunder which gave General Spears an opportunity to bring about the end of their régime. A platoon of French troops fired upon an unarmed demonstration by Lebanese students right in front of the British Legation, in full view of a group of war correspondents who had been flown up from Cairo. Summoned again by General Spears, the Minister of State flew to Beirut and held consultations with General Spears and General Catroux, whom the Free French authorities had sent post-haste from Algiers to take command during the emergency. The French Délégué-Général was ordered to release the arrested Lebanese Cabinet Ministers, which he did, but this move did not result in any marked improvement in the situation, which Mr. Casey was most anxious to clear up in view of the forthcoming conference in Cairo. Finally, General Catroux agreed reluctantly to British insistence that administrative powers should gradually be handed over to the Lebanese, and in due course to the Syrians as well.

The events which led up to the final expulsion of the French from the Levant States, and particularly the part played in them by the British, are of supreme importance. They have influenced Anglo-French relations ever since, and may well have been to some extent responsible for the present situation in the Middle East: the French view is that they definitely are, for instead of there being a united Western front, England, France and America pursue individual and

sometimes conflicting policies of their own. Basically, the situation was that to obtain support for the campaign against the Vichy French in the Levant, General de Gaulle and General Catroux, speaking in the name of the Free French, had been persuaded by the British Government to promise Syria and the Lebanon their independence. This was by no means the first, and will probably not be the last, wartime promise. More than half the discontents and agitations in various parts of the Middle East arose from promises of this kind either during the first or second world war, few of which were entirely fulfilled, anyway at the stated time. But when the French authorities, on the plea that no major decision could be taken before France was liberated and a regularly elected French Government established, hesitated to bow to local agitation and implement the promised independence, Britain stepped in and obliged them to do so.

There were two reasons for this course of action. Firstly, there were genuine fears that unless full independence was proclaimed there would be particularly untimely large-scale disorders. The war had not at that time been won, although the Allies were well on their way to victory. Stalin and Chiang Kai Shek, as well as President Roosevelt, were about to hold vital conferences in the Middle East with Mr. Churchill and other Allied leaders. In these circumstances, a minor revolution in the Arab world would be, at the least, inconvenient. Secondly, there was what people on the spot felt to be General Spears' lack of sympathy for the French. This was manifested in many ways, most of them petty, and it was with relish that he seized upon a series of stupid blunders by some of the French authorities to bring about their downfall. One has only to read some of the General's election addresses, when he stood as Conservative candidate for Carlisle in the 1945 general elections, to understand the light in which he saw himself—champion of the Arab world. There is no doubt at all in the minds of observers who were in the Levant States at this period that the attitude of General Spears and some of his assistants encouraged the Lebanese and Syrian extremists. And however good a legalistic case the British representatives in the Middle East might have had for their determination to prevent any French procrastination, there is every reason to believe that they could easily, had they wanted to, persuaded the Arab leaders to postpone their ultimate demands until the war was really over. The French nation had surely suffered indignities enough in the years

between 1939 and 1943 for them to be subjected to this unnecessary loss of face in a part of the world where they were anyway already jealous of the British.

There was a lull for nearly two years after the Beirut troubles, during which the French slowly handed over the reins of government to the Lebanese and Syrian leaders. Then, just as VE Day was being celebrated, their authorities in Syria seemed completely to lose their heads and to go out of their way to hasten France's end in the Levant. The history of the last two decades points the lesson that the British, in their relations with their Empire, colonies, and mandated territories, were always ready to yield to force: the French practice, on the other hand, was to meet force by greater force. (Incidentally, neither course led to spectacularly successful results.) Having lost the Lebanon by an ill-timed and ill-judged display of force, the French now proceeded to use even greater violence in Syria—and lost the territory entirely, completely, speedily, and for ever. Relations with the Syrian Government were strained because the French were flatly refusing to transfer to them the 'local levies' and their arms and armaments until Syria signed a treaty of alliance with France giving her similar privileges to those the British enjoyed at the time in Egypt and Iraq, with an additional clause giving France a special position in the cultural sphere. (The local levies, known as the 'Troupes Spéciales', were locally enlisted regiments, trained, equipped, and officered by the French, and paid for through the 'Intérêts Communs' with money obtained almost entirely from customs receipts, which were controlled by the French.) Both the Lebanon and Syria continued in their refusal to sign a treaty 'under duress'; but it was in Damascus, now, that feelings were beginning to get out of hand. In the midst of this agitation the French, against all warnings from the British, brought into the Levant a troopship full of Senegalese troops, disembarked them at Beirut and sent them down to Syria. Their excuse was that these were not reinforcements, as the Syrians claimed, but replacements of units which had been sent home. There were angry demonstrations in Damascus. In May 1945 the French threatened to take strong measures, but the demonstrations continued—as did the refusal to sign a treaty. The French authorities mounted a battery of artillery on the high ground outside Damascus. The Syrians were uneasy, but regarded this move

merely as an additional threat. Then, suddenly, Colonel Olivier Roget, who was acting French Military Commander in Damascus, gave the order to open fire. Eight shells were fired into Damascus. One hit Parliament ; the rest fell in crowded, lower-class areas and caused severe loss of life.

Again General Spears sent urgent messages to Cairo and Sir Edward Grigg, who was now the Minister Resident, flew to Beirut as quickly as he could. He was driven to Damascus and there shown not only the destruction caused by the shells but also some wanton damage from machine-gun fire. After the bombardment there had been a short but severe fight between the French troops and infuriated Syrians, and the following day British troops with a few tanks and armoured cars entered the silent city of Damascus, to be received later in the day as liberating heroes by the Syrians. They rapidly restored order and escorted out of the city all French women and children—following this up a little later by evacuating most of the French troops.

Disorders spread all over Syria. At Hama, where the population had for centuries been renowned for their fanaticism, a ' declaration of war ' against the French had publicly been announced amidst scenes of wild excitement : for the next few days the Mayor issued daily ' war communiques ' containing such startling but improbable items as a claim that the townspeople had shot down several French aeroplanes. Fortunately there were no Frenchmen in the town. There were, however, two British officers and the French believed that they were to some extent responsible for encouraging the Syrians in their extremism. Elsewhere British troops evacuated French units from outlying stations, particularly along the Turkish frontier, where it was feared they might be massacred, but some French officers refused to leave their posts. In Idlib, south of Aleppo, for example, two French officers who believed themselves to be well liked by the townspeople, decided to stay on : they were brutally murdered by the mob. Finally, practically every Frenchman in Syria was withdrawn to Beirut, where many of them were outspokenly bitter about the part they believed the British had played in encouraging the Syrians in their ' revolt '. It was true that a good many of the younger British political officers, who, for duties connected with the maintenance of public security and other war tasks, had been posted to

various towns in Syria, were anti-French and pro-Syrian, and some of them made rather foolish statements. But, in the last resort, it was the total inability of the French authorities to appreciate the changed conditions in the Middle East that hastened the loss of all French influence, and killed the possibility of Syria signing the kind of treaty the French Government desired. In 1945 the formal ending of the French Mandate by the United Nations and the admission of the two States as members further weakened the French position.

It was now obvious that the French could no longer remain in Beirut either, unless they did something to calm public opinion, which was being gradually inflamed by reports and agitators from Syria. They were urged to announce the date of their departure, and after considerable argument, the British took the lead and declared that all their forces would be withdrawn from Syria and the Lebanon by the end of December 1946. This made it possible for the French to announce a similar decision without any further loss of face. In fact British forces were all withdrawn by the spring, mainly because their continued presence was so distasteful to the French Government, which, with great reluctance and because no other action was possible, then agreed to hand over the local levies and 'all the powers and functions' which they had still retained.

In the period between their agreement to withdraw and their actual departure, the French in Beirut were politically very active. What they were probably aiming at was the sowing of seeds of future influence, but the ground was mostly barren. They established relations with various small political parties, but, with the notable exception of the exceedingly pro-French M. Emile Edde, whom they had made Chef du Gouvernement during the short time in December 1943 when the Lebanese Cabinet was under arrest, they found little real support. The entire nation appeared to be overjoyed at the achievement, at last, of independence, while the politically minded Lebanese were excited by the potential power of the Arab League. Some of the Christian communities, particularly the Maronites, led by their priests, were a little uneasy. They saw themselves as a little Christian island in the midst of a slowly encroaching Moslem sea and, in their hearts, although few dared say so openly, were sorry to see the French go. The wartime Press censorship, operated jointly and severally by British, French, and Lebanese, was still in force, and

it was difficult for any newspaper correspondent to present an accurate picture of events. The outburst of popular rejoicing when the last French officer left the country was apparently spontaneous : on every hand one heard hatred of the French expressed loudly, emphatically, and in Arabic. Yet it is a curious sidelight on the Lebanese mentality and at the same time a tribute to one aspect of France's work in the Lebanon, that it took at any rate the educated classes only a few weeks to become almost *plus français que les français*, for French to return as the common language of upper-class Beirut, and for the passion for things French to reassert itself : Paris remains the spiritual home of the majority of cultured Lebanese.

For reasons best known to themselves—possibly an attempt to discredit the Lebanese Presidency and Government—French intelligence and propaganda officials made much at this time of a curious episode for which no satisfactory explanation has yet been offered. A mysterious Lebanese doctor, claiming to be a hypnotist and magician, had worked up a large practice in official circles and, in the manner of a minor Rasputin, had made himself indispensable to various people in the immediate entourage of the President. But there were several most unsavoury episodes in which he was supposed to have played a leading part, and after two spectacular suicides in high places, he was arrested. He warned the authorities solemnly that the official who signed a warrant would lose the use of his right arm : the same day the officer in question fell down and broke his arm. Similar pronouncements, uttered in tones of doom, were issued to all kinds of people who had any connexion with the case—the Judge, one or two Ministers, other officers—and all appeared to take effect. Finally, according to French sources, who produced a well-documented statement on the whole affair, the hypnotist declared that unless he were freed, the President would suffer a severe illness : rumour had it that he would go mad. Shortly after this, Bishara el Khoury became so ill that he was taken off in great secrecy to a nursing-home in Haifa : rumour turned this nursing-home into a mental hospital.

This caused the utmost consternation amongst the politicians who were just beginning to enjoy the fruits of office in an independent state. The President was a valuable and respected figurehead : his loss would be a severe blow for all who had hitched their stars to his

bandwagon. The French were delighted: the newly independent State seemed to be crumbling. But despite their efforts to keep the pot boiling, the affair petered out rather tamely with the President's return from Haifa, still obviously ill and frail but certainly perfectly sane. The Government persuaded him to give interviews to selected members of the foreign Press and gradually the belief, widely held in Cairo, Paris, and elsewhere, that he had gone off his head, died away. This was France's last card, and after a somewhat futile effort to bolster up a small Lebanese Fascist Party they retired from the scene.

The new Government's task was not formidable. It could rely upon the support of a population still grateful for its success in obtaining the country's full independence, and if the administration was already beginning to show signs of the weaknesses which have since been alarmingly accentuated, it was at least able to take advantage of the various organizations set up by the Allied forces during the war. And, moreover, the Lebanon was still extremely prosperous. The city of Beirut was resuming in a most successful manner its role of the broker of the Eastern Mediterranean and commission agent for the Arab Middle East. Gold and dollars, Swiss francs, and pound notes were sold not in a black market but in an open 'free' market, and the profits were enormous. In addition, Lebanese, more indefatigable searchers after fortunes in foreign countries than even the Scots, were now remitting to their old folk in the Lebanon a steady stream of bankers' orders from almost all countries of the world, particularly North and South America. Rich Lebanese, whose wealth was increasing each week, were building large new mansions in the mountains, furnishing them elaborately, and fitting them out with glittering new gadgets from the United States. The narrow, winding streets of Beirut were impassably packed by an unbroken succession of brand-new American cars: indeed an American diplomat declared there were more new cars in Beirut than there would be in any American town of comparable size. The shops were filled with a fantastic variety of luxury goods, quite unknown at that time in England or Europe.

Not only was the country prosperous and self-satisfied: an issue was just arising which was clearly going to bring together not only the many small political and religious groups but also the mass of the Lebanese people. It was Palestine, where already the first ominous

rumblings of the coming storm were to be heard. The late Riad Bey es Solh, whom no one could accuse of being an idealist, stated at this period that the Lebanon's attitude to the West would depend upon the West's attitude to the Arab-Jew struggle in Palestine. If England and the United States 'let down the Arabs' there could be no hope of cordial relations with the Arab States. This statement passed unread and unnoticed by British and American officials in the Middle East.

The situation in Syria was somewhat different. When the cheering had begun to die away, the newly formed Government found itself faced by many difficulties, most of which arose basically from the lamentable lack of men capable of running the administration. There were, further, no proper political parties and the parliamentary system which the country adopted was neither understood nor in fact workable in existing conditions. Power was held, and continued to be so for some years, by a collection of political groups called the 'National Bloc'. Its leader, and President of the Syrian Republic, was Shukri al Kuwatli, who had a long and in its way admirable history of violent opposition to his country's masters, first as a boy, the Turks, and then the French. He had, however, no administrative experience or, indeed, natural ability for a constructive as opposed to a destructive rôle—and gave few signs that he thought this necessary. He was a national hero: he had fought for and won independence: that, surely, was sufficient.

There is a tendency in the minds of all simple and backward people who, over a long period, have been persuaded by their more politically minded leaders that all their misfortunes spring from the fact that they are under foreign domination, to expect a golden age to dawn immediately they achieve that independence. This does not of course occur, and it certainly did not in Syria. The Government, indeed, was quite overcome by the many problems facing them, and took the usual way out—blame the foreigner who, although now absent, continued to be the root of all the country's troubles. Fierce anti-French feeling was thus artificially maintained.

Syria is a large country in comparison to the little Lebanon, and far less compact. The French had, for their own purposes, granted a certain degree of autonomy to the Druze, who lived in the mountains of the south, and the Alawis in the north-west. They, and other

religious or tribal groups, the Kurds and some small Christian minorities, feared that the new Syrian Government would deprive them of various privileges which were granted them by the French—on the old imperialistic principle of divide and rule—and relations with Damascus became strained. The new Government attributed this early discontent to the work of French agents, but this was not the case: it may have sprung from French policy in the days of the Mandate, but the French now had no hand in it. Aleppo, an independently minded city in the north, produced its own politicians who were critical of the Damascus régime, on the well-founded grounds that to the new Government Damascus was Syria and no other region was worthy of attention. Other rural areas voiced the same complaint: nothing was done for them and yet they paid all the taxes.

Jamil Mardam Bey, a smooth politician who had been appointed Prime Minister, managed, in the fashion of his colleagues in other Arab states, to divert attention from deficiencies at home by that wonderful Middle Eastern red-herring—the Palestine question. For months before and months after the actual 'Palestine war' leaders of Arab governments obtained unity and support from all kinds of opposition groups merely by calling attention to the danger in which their Arab brethren stood in Palestine. Palestine, indeed, was an Allah-sent blessing to inefficient and corrupt governments who could no longer obtain the same backing as before on the plea that 'national aspirations' must be achieved. With slogans such as 'Syria will never allow a Jewish State to be formed in Palestine' and 'we will never permit hundreds of thousands of European Jews to immigrate to Palestine' constantly upon his lips, Mardam Bey effectively distracted his countrymen's attention from the deficiencies of his administration. He made a show of building up the Army and did in fact get together an efficient police force from the trained men and the materials the French had left behind. But otherwise the Government did nothing. Administration was not easy. There were far too few competent, trained men to fill the empty posts and the new ones immediately created. Any young Syrian who had received an education thought himself fitted for a job in the Government and, had he been prominent in Nationalist demonstrations, this had to be a senior post. Another difficulty, most common in the Arab Middle

East, was the reluctance of any official to serve in the provinces : it was the capital or nothing.

In both Syria and the Lebanon there is still widespread poverty. But Syria, an under-populated country of considerable potential wealth, was basically better off, though curiously enough without the flashy ostentation of Beirut. The Syrians, except for a small minority who managed even during the time of the French to make the best of two worlds, lived quietly and with a certain dignity. Some of the landowners are undoubtedly wealthy, but few families displayed their wealth and then only in the seclusion of their own homes. And of course there was no Damascene counterpart of the flashy Europeanized night-life of Beirut or the pleasant summer resorts in the Lebanese hills. An honest, efficient, and hard-working administration could rapidly have increased the general level of prosperity and improved the wretched living conditions of the masses. Xenophobia was, however, an easier card to play, and having attained its independence Syria was resolute in its refusal to have any truck with Europeans.

This deliberate remoteness from all things Western is even more pronounced in the Arabian Peninsula, where, except in the oil producing regions of Saudi Arabia, conditions have changed little since the days of the Ottoman Empire. Xenophobia is not rife in Arabia for, again excepting the American oil areas, there are no foreigners.

CHAPTER VIII

SAUDI ARABIA

WHEN World War II ended Saudi Arabia, despite quite appreciable financial and material assistance from Britain and the United States, was in the parlous economic condition from which it has indeed never emerged. The country which King Ibn Saud rules as a despot in fact faced a crisis, largely, in his view, because the war had halved the number of Moslems who each year made the pilgrimage to Mecca, as the Koran orders them to do at least once in a lifetime. The revenue Saudi Arabia collected from pilgrims before the war amounted in a good season to some four millions sterling. The King saw no chance of a speedy revival of this profitable traffic and he was being pressed for money by a large and greedy family. He was also behindhand in the 'subsidies' he had to pay to the chiefs of various large and important tribes who had to be annually bribed to keep the peace and to refrain from disturbing the internal security of the country. In addition, he needed to import large quantities of cereals to keep his nomadic people alive.

A more important actual, and infinitely greater potential, source of income was to be expected from the oil concession he had granted to the Arabian American Oil Company in 1933. But the outbreak of war had interrupted the development of what is now an immensely wealthy enterprise which was just beginning to export in 1939. The King fully believed the American experts who had told him that there were practically limitless oil deposits beneath the barren desert sands of his kingdom, but the initial payments he had received on the granting of the concession, as well as actual royalties and advances against royalties had all been spent and the money coming in was still insufficient to make much impression in the always empty State coffers. The \$17,000,000 worth of lease-lend aid he had received from the United States and a roughly similar amount from Britain had also disappeared without any noticeable influence on Saudi Arabian economy.

In 1946 the King sent his trusted friend and Finance Minister,

Sheikh Abdullah es Suliman, to the United States to try to raise a new loan. The Minister was successful in Washington, where Saudi Arabia was granted a credit of \$2,000,000 to buy surplus war material and a loan of \$10,000,000 from the Export-Import Bank. But these amounts followed all earlier revenues—they just disappeared.

It is indeed one of the great mysteries of Saudi Arabia that instead of being one of the wealthiest of the Arab countries, it is almost the poorest. Where does the money go? No one has provided a satisfactory answer. The government machinery is of the sketchiest; the outlay on public services negligible. Writing in the *Middle East Journal* in April 1947, Mr. Raymond F. Mikesell gave this account of Saudi Arabian economic and financial methods:

The Saudi Arabian Government has done little as yet to evolve a financial system which would not only meet its own cultural traditions, but would be adequate to cope with complicating (modern) developments. Western budgetary and fiscal practice are practically unknown. No Budget estimates are published, although crude summaries of expenditure and revenue are prepared for the purpose of negotiating with foreign Powers. There appears to be little distinction between disbursements for the King's household and for governmental administration. Likewise, little distinction is made between those financial activities of the Government which are contingent upon its administrative functions and its commercial transactions as the chief importer of merchandise, for distribution in the form of subsidies to tribal chieftains, payment in kind to government employees, and direct cash sale to merchants.

The Government's tax receipts are derived largely from customs duties and the *ushr*, a ten per cent. levy on all produce, payable in kind. The inefficiency of the tax administration, however, results in a meagre yield, while extensive smuggling greatly reduces the possible revenue from Customs. In recent years income from taxation has amounted to less than five per cent. of the total. The bulk of the Government's revenue is derived from the pilgrimage and from royalties paid by the Arabian American Oil Company and the Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate.

Certainly the bulk of the national income goes to provide the King's very many children, the relatives and hangers-on, with the flashy American limousines, the air-conditioning plant, and refrigerators to which they were totally unaccustomed, and even the aeroplanes which are now becoming the fashion amongst the Palace aristocracy. But oil royalties and revenue generally are paid in good hard cash, British sovereigns or American-minted silver riyals, and it is strongly believed that great quantities of them are carefully buried in the Saudi Arabian sands—against the rainy day which must come sometime even in a country where it never rains. It is probable that a great deal of this hidden wealth has been carefully hoarded by various of the King's sons to finance their fight for the succession when Ibn Saud dies.

Some three years ago a Saudi Arabian airliner—the country has an American-run airline—forced-landed on the banks of the Nile near Cairo. In it was a Cabinet Minister and a suite of thirty. In it also were 30,000 gold sovereigns. The Minister was en route for Cairo.

King Ibn Saud had remained neutral throughout the war but its geographical position brought his country into the Allied Middle East orbit and it was the cause of fierce economic rivalry between Great Britain and the United States. The British Treasury wished Saudi Arabia to enter the sterling area in common with the other Middle Eastern countries. This arrangement would greatly have facilitated the work of the Middle East Supply Centre set up in Cairo in 1941 to organize supplies for those countries whose normal markets were closed by war or lack of shipping. The M.E.S.C. arranged a large scale exchange of produce within the Middle Eastern states, from which Saudi Arabia benefited largely. M.E.S.C. experts also drilled deep water wells in the interior of the country near Riyadh and brought under cultivation nearly two thousand acres of land which had previously been desert.

But although the United States were co-operating with Britain in M.E.S.C., their Treasury advisers were anxious to keep Saudi Arabia out of the sterling area and particularly to prevent the \$10,000,000 which ARAMCO. were paying Ibn Saud at that time for oil royalties from going into the sterling pool. The policy of the United States at the time as expressed by their diplomatic representatives in

Cairo was : ' We leave political influence in Saudi Arabia to Britain : the economic influence is ours '. This semi-official division of responsibility caused difficulties which have since become more pronounced and, indeed, more widespread. Obviously, there can be no clear division between the economic and the political, above all in the backward countries of the Middle East. Shadows were already being cast.

Britain's political influence in Saudi Arabia was exercised to some extent not by accredited diplomatic representatives but by some well-known but curious, eccentric personalities who had embraced the Moslem faith. The Americans found these men far from attractive and there appeared to be a fairly general resentment felt against these converts to Islam. No matter how genuine and sincere such a conversion might be, it is so very difficult for such a change of faith, with all that it entails, to be understood by more conservative Christians that reasons unconnected with religion are often sought. There is little doubt Americans in Saudi Arabia were resentful and suspicious of the close ties between King Ibn Saud and various Englishmen who had elected to turn Moslem. And, in any case, they felt there were intimacies between the despotic Moslem ruler and these renegade Englishmen to which they, who were getting ready to ' run ' his kingdom for him, were barred. But they did insist, successfully, that the dollars Saudi Arabia was earning from an American oil company should be spent on direct imports from the United States.

Despite the incongruous modern inventions which petroleum and America have brought to his country, King Ibn Saud remains a most conservative Moslem monarch. At the end of hostilities there were no Christians permitted in Saudi Arabia except those who worked in the petroleum fields and the diplomatic and commercial representatives of Christian powers in Jedda, the chief port, where foreigners are permitted to live. The King has his own capital at Riyadh and it is difficult for Christians to obtain permission even to go there and they can only visit the town for a few hours. King Ibn Saud's complete control over the Hijaz and the Nejd, now together called Saudi Arabia, was brought about just after World War I when his fanatical Wahhabi forces attacked and drove out the Hashimite King Husain. This accounts for the extremely strained relations which always existed between King Ibn Saud and King Abdullah of Transjordan. It also

accounts for the considerable difficulties which the American oilmen meet in their exploitation of the petroleum fields and in the working of the great Dhahran refinery, for the Wahhabis are the most reactionary and intolerant of all the Moslem sects, seeking always a forcible return to the pure fundamentals of Islam for themselves and all with whom they come into contact. Besides them, the Moslem Brotherhood are mild and easy-going. Nothing displeases the average Saudi Arabian diplomatic representative more than to hear his country spoken of as a backward, bare-footed feudal state, but, in fact, that is a fair description. Social practices now to be found possibly nowhere else in the world are still current in Ibn Saud's kingdom. Slavery, not only the kind of paternal, domestic slavery which is not unknown in other small Arab countries, but on a very limited scale in the interior, a more brutal kind involving the buying, selling, and branding of human beings for hard agricultural labour still exists. The slaves are generally of a low degree of development and seem to have no desire to escape from the life which they believe Allah decreed for them. The law is the *sharia* or divine law of Islam and it is rigorously imposed, without the modern adaptations and refinements which have been introduced in Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, etc. The penalty for theft is the severance of the malefactor's hand; this is generally carried out within a few hours and sometimes a few minutes of sentence and rarely gives time for a proper investigation, were such a thing possible, and certainly not for an appeal. It is possible to encounter many cheerful old Arabs sitting around in the miserable cafés of Dhahran who have had both a hand and a foot cut off; they protest their innocence of any crime but seem to bear no one any malice, ascribing their ill-fortune to 'the will of Allah'. Women in Saudi Arabia are always heavily veiled and rarely leave the harem. Illiteracy is almost universal.

All this is of course the concern only of King Ibn Saud and his people, except that he and his advisers clearly realize that splendid backward isolation is no longer feasible. Indeed, as his country can only exist by the exploitation of its infinitely rich oil deposits by foreigners, and as he turns more and more frequently to those foreigners for various kinds of assistance, with the accent usually upon hard cash, a somewhat larger degree of co-operation might have been expected. With great difficulty ARAMCO. obtained

permission to import alcohol with all the other foods, entertainments, and comforts of the American way of life, things which are not only forbidden but entirely unprocurable in Saudi Arabia, but they are unable to extend any of these 'benefits' to their now large local staff, nor indeed to any Moslems in their employ even be they well educated emancipated Palestinians or Egyptians. Nor have the Americans been able to obtain permission to build a church or even hold any kind of Christian religious service in Dhahran—which in all ways is an American rather than an Arabian town. American children obtain no religious education and Christian babies cannot even be baptized. King Ibn Saud's hold on his country is complete : he is temporal and religious leader ; chief of the government and chief of the army ; and much of the influence he wields, not only in his own country but in the Arab world, is derived from the fact that he won his country by conquest. He is, however, a shrewd enough man to realize that gradually, as education spreads, his hold or that of whichever of his dozens of sons succeeds him will weaken, and it is probably for that reason that not only is there still very little education in Saudi Arabia, but his subjects are not encouraged to travel and foreigners experience such enormous difficulties in obtaining visas to enter all but the purely American oil zone of the country.

Palestine was a far-away, little known, little heard of land to all but the tiny politically conscious minority—mainly relatives of the King—and echoes of the disturbances there rang but faintly in Jedda and Riyadh and not at all in the interior of the country. Saudi Arabia's membership of the Arab League impelled the King to take a certain notice of the problem, however, and for a time he toyed with the idea of leading a crusade against the Jews. His people are by nature and heritage warriors and although the wars they and their fathers had fought had been nothing more serious than tribal battles and had never taken them outside the Arabian Peninsula, they would readily have answered his call. But his position was complicated by his dependence upon the rich royalties provided by the American oil company, and America was clearly on the side of the Jews. President Roosevelt had, on his way back to the United States from the Yalta Conference, taken the trouble to meet Ibn Saud and discuss the Palestine question with him. What the President said is not recorded, but it is probable that he anyway hinted that the United States would

be distressed at any deliberate widening of a conflict which, anyway at that time, was nothing more than an internal Palestinian affair. In line with the other members of the Arab League in the period prior to the ending of the British Mandate in Palestine, King Ibn Saud promised to furnish troops for intervention in Palestine and did contribute to the funds for equipping Arab volunteer armies. He was obliged, however, by the economic and financial considerations which were already playing so unwonted and unusual a part in the life of Saudi Arabia, to discard the Holy War project—a project which would have been so very much after his own heart. His chagrin was all the deeper when his lifelong enemy King Abdullah put on the mantle, which should have been Ibn Saud's, of the Arab warrior king.

Faint as were the echoes the Palestine disturbances awoke in Saudi Arabia, they hardly sounded at all inside the high mountainous confines of the Yemen—the seventh and last of the Arab League States.

CHAPTER IX

THE YEMEN

ONE of the most incongruous features of modern political institutions is the fact that the Yemen should be a full member of both the United Nations and the Arab League, with a vote equal in power to that of any other member. For the Yemen, one of the least known countries not only of the Arab Middle East, but also of the world to-day, is in no way fitted to play any part in the responsibilities or obligations of either organization. It is a small, backward, unknown mediaeval country into which few foreigners have ever penetrated. For that reason it is difficult to have any clear idea of what does go on inside the boundaries of this small Moslem kingdom whose population is estimated at between three million and three and a half million souls : and as nothing remotely resembling a proper census has ever been taken, the estimate is indeed a rough one—more of a guess than anything else.

The closest the average observer of Middle Eastern affairs can get to knowing the Yemen is to make the acquaintance of the Yemenite delegates who are fairly assiduous supporters of the Arab League meetings. They are usually charming little men, beautifully and richly dressed in elaborate Arab robes, with jewelled daggers tucked into their jewelled belts and handfuls of Maria Theresa dollars, golden louis, and gold sovereigns in their capacious pockets. They are always ready to talk of the beauties of their country, to deny its backwardness and to issue blanket invitations to visit it—invitations which are never notified to the Yemenite authorities who flatly refuse to issue visas on any pretext whatsoever. Not even the Arab governments are able to maintain diplomatic missions at San'a, the seat of government, tucked away in the fertile plains of the highland plateau. Seen from the air the highlands give an impression of intensive, terraced cultivation, shown by little semi-circles of vivid green against the dark-coloured hills. The country is divided into two distinct areas : the high, temperate inland plateau and the low, damp hot coastal plain which contains the ports of Hodeida and Mokha, and they are

joined by prehistoric stone tracks some of which were widened by the Turkish Army in the nineteenth century, the last foreign element to have got more than one foot inside the Yemen. One of these tracks has more recently been further widened and flattened to make motor traffic possible, although it can hardly be said to be suitable for vehicles.

Within the limits of its feudal social structure, the Yemen appears to be a fairly flourishing little country with a good export trade in excellent Mokha coffee, hides, and timber, upon the proceeds of which the merchant princes of San'a have built palatial villas and enjoy a high degree of luxury. There are, however, great extremes of wealth and poverty in the Yemen and the poorer classes are practically slaves : in fact slavery still persists. Until the State of Israel was created much of the commerce was in the hands of the Yemen's thirty thousand Jews, who also produced beautiful gold and silver filigree work which was sold for high prices in Cairo and Damascus and also in the European and American markets. Jews were treated as second-class citizens, were obliged to live in restricted areas and, it is alleged, made to perform degrading manual labour. It is doubtful, however, whether they were any worse off than a large part of the Moslem population, and they certainly were not slaves. There is evidence that from time to time they were deliberately ill-treated and during, for example, the periodical food shortages, they were the first to suffer. There had always been a steady flow of Yemenite Jewish immigrants into Palestine and this was largely increased when the Israeli Government started their drive to repatriate as many oriental Jews as possible. The Yemenite Government appeared to have no objections to letting them go and after arrangements were made through representatives of both countries meeting in Aden, some thousands of Jews were flown out. They arrived often in a pitiable condition, most of the men weighing less than seven stone. This is not quite so drastic as it may sound for physically the Yemenites are almost always little men. Nor would it be entirely true to suggest that it was only the Jews who were ill-treated. The Yemen is a harsh autocratic country and any section of the population which is foolish enough to oppose or disobey the ruling clique (it would be a misuse of words to call it a government) pays heavily for its folly.

Since the Yemen finally shook off Turkish control at the end of the first world war, a control, incidentally, which it had from time to time resisted so vigorously that several small-scale wars had to be fought before Turkish suzerainty was re-established, all efforts by foreign powers to obtain any influence in the country have failed. As barriers to Western penetration have slowly been lowered in all the surrounding countries, those in the Yemen have been raised even higher and the country has maintained a quite astonishing degree of remoteness. It is therefore all the more strange that the Yemen and its near neighbour Saudi Arabia, the two most isolated of the Moslem countries, should have recognized the Soviet Union in the middle twenties when all the more progressive countries still refused to do so. As a result of diplomatic exchanges a small Russian mission, largely Moslem in composition, went to San'a in 1928 and a woman doctor indeed remained there until just before the outbreak of the second world war. The few Russians achieved neither popularity nor influence and were generally ignored. It is fair to assume, however, that they obtained a good deal of information about the little-known country. Russia was not the only great Power to have made an unsuccessful bid to gain influence in the Yemen. During the early thirties the British Government were seriously alarmed at a determined effort by Italy to gain a foothold in the Yemen. The Italian Government had made many previous efforts to enter into relations with the Imam since the establishment of Eritrea as an Italian colony. The British Admiralty, in particular, were strongly adverse to the idea of any power and, especially, at that time, Italy, obtaining control of both coasts of the southern bottle-neck of the Red Sea, which was obviously as important to imperial communications as is the Suez Canal to which it is the eastern approach. But Whitehall need not have worried. The various Italian missions which eventually reached San'a made no impression whatsoever upon the Imam or his people. Italian diplomats complained to Rome that they lived in constant fear of having their throats cut and they felt themselves horribly unwelcome. The stronger characters amongst the Italians, mainly doctors, did however manage to remain in the Yemen until after the outbreak of war in 1940 and they were later joined there by a few army officers who had escaped from Ethiopia. By 1943, when the war in the Middle East was over, the Imam finally yielded to British

pressure and interned a total of twenty enemy aliens. General Headquarters of the Middle East Command declared that they had been broadcasting pro-Axis propaganda in Arabic from San'a. The broadcasting 'station' still exists and transmits intermittent, rudimentary programmes, mainly readings from the Koran, for the few proud owners of radios. There is, in theory, a postal system in the Yemen, but it would be unwise to place too much faith in its efficiency, and the old Turkish-built telegraph line still carries communications between the ports of Mokha (now decaying) and Hodeida and the capital.

The Yemen was far more affected by the Palestine war than it had been by either of the two world wars. The Yemenite delegate to the Arab League meetings, at which he usually had nothing to say whatsoever and generally contented himself with voting with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, delivered long emotional discourses on the subject of Palestine and promised that the full weight of the Yemenite Army would be thrown in on the side of the Arabs. The Yemenite Army is reliably computed to consist of around 20,000 barefooted warriors, feudal retainers of the ruling family, the merchant princes, and the tribal chiefs. The standard armament is the long-barrelled Turkish rifle of pre-1914 vintage. They have no transport other than their own bare feet—and probably a few camels. By dint of an enormous feat of organization and improvisation a small token force of these formidable, hirsute warriors was got together and sent off to Palestine, where they were an object of curiosity and awe to their allies: it is not believed that they had any actual contact with the enemy. The army is recruited mainly by press-gang methods. Boys between the ages of four and twelve are forcibly taken from their tribes and trained to serve in the army or the militia—which is a kind of trained reserve. The system appears to be a decadent variation of the Turkish Janissaries with the difference that Yemenite boys are definitely prisoners and no attempt is made to educate them in anything but being soldiers. They are also to some extent hostages for the good behaviour of their tribes. If, judged on modern standards, the Yemenite Army may appear a little ridiculous, it should not be forgotten that the Yemenis are famous fighters and repeatedly defeated and slaughtered large forces of regular Turkish troops sent to subdue them. In the same way, the Yemenite Jews played a

disproportionately large part in the Jewish terrorist organizations and form one of the most unruly elements in Israel to-day.

Only a vague outline of political developments inside the Yemen ever reaches the outside world. This is due not only to the remoteness of the country but also to the fact that its political structure is primitive in the extreme and unless there is a major upheaval what happens has no impact upon anyone but the Yemenite ruling classes themselves. Such an upheaval did occur in February 1948, when the old Imam Yahya—an extreme, fanatical reactionary who at the age of eighty had become partially paralysed—was assassinated. There was the usual fight for the succession during which several of his many sons, all bearing the title of Seif ul Islam (Sword of Islam) were killed, before one of the richest of the merchant princes, Sayyid Abdullah al Wazir, declared himself the new Imam. He announced the formation of a new constitutional and liberal régime, but although he appeared to have a certain local following in San'a, the former Crown Prince, Seif ul Islam Ahmad, gained the support of the army and after more fighting entered San'a, deposed the Imam Abdullah, who was rapidly executed, and was duly installed as Imam, taking the name of Nasr ud-Dini 'llah. He was formally recognized as the new ruler by the Arab League (whose Secretary-General, Azzam Pasha, was unable at that time to obtain permission to visit San'a), Great Britain, and the United Nations. No more has been heard of a more progressive and enlightened policy being adopted in the Yemen which continues in its remote, mediaeval path.

Britain's main interest in this little-known Moslem country has been its position in the highest part of Arabia, at the extreme south-western corner, overlooking imperial communications through the Red Sea and the Protectorate of Aden. The Yemen may yet become important to the Western world. It is known that there are mineral deposits in the mountains and there may also be small deposits of petroleum. So far, however, despite protracted efforts by American and British oil companies, the new Imam has followed closely the policy established by his father and no promises of gold, dollars, yachts, cars, or refrigerators have been able to persuade him to admit foreigners, so that no exploration or concession has been possible. Britain is also anxious to obtain permission for its representatives to enter the country for three important reasons.

They wish to establish meteorological stations which they believe would greatly facilitate air travel, both civil and military, in the Arabian and Persian Gulf areas, well known for their treacherous sudden storms. For a brief period during the war a meteorological station was in fact set up in the Yemen and proved of great value. The second reason is the desire to bring the Yemen fully into the area of locust control. It is the only missing link in a chain of stations ranging from Kenya to North Africa and it is unfortunately a very important link. Agreement had been reached but so many difficulties have always been placed in the way of members of the Locust Control Centre that they have never been able to work for more than a few days on the outer fringes of the country. Thirdly, there have been numerous minor incidents on the poorly delimited frontier between the Yemen and the Aden Protectorate. Britain wishes not only to come to an agreement on frontiers but also wishes to have representatives on the spot who, by contact with the Government of the Yemen, will at least have a chance of settling incidents before they assume serious proportions, and can be turned into excellent anti-British propaganda by the Arabic Press in Egypt and other similar sources who wish England only ill.

In the autumn of 1950 the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Yemen Government visited London at the head of a small delegation for talks with the Foreign Office and as a result an agreement was reached, the text of which was published in March 1951. If this agreement be carried out the Yemen will no longer be 'more remote than Tibet' because it is planned to establish normal diplomatic relations before the end of 1951, when the Yemen will agree to co-operate on 'economic matters, culture, education, and hygiene'. This would open the country to experts and technicians from the British Middle East Office in Cairo. There is some doubt whether the agreement will be carried out in detail. The Egyptian Government, which is on terms of cordiality with the Government of the Imam Ahmad, have made serious attempts for the past few years to establish normal diplomatic relations, but without success. One or two representatives of the Imam live permanently in the Cairo suburb of Heliopolis but so far no Egyptian representative has penetrated into the Yemen. The Egyptians feel there is little real likelihood of the United Kingdom opening a consulate or legation there so long

as no member of the Arab League is represented. 'If we who are Arabs and Moslems, speaking the same language and worshipping Allah are not allowed into the country, is it likely that you who are Christians will be?' The Foreign Office, however, believe a mission will soon leave London for San'a.

PART II

THE PALESTINE WAR

CHAPTER X

PALESTINE : THE PROBLEM

FOR thirty years, from the end of the first world war until the emergence of the State of Israel, Palestine was one of the major preoccupations of the British Government, presenting a problem which increased steadily in difficulty and complexity until it became, in the years following the second world war, possibly the most important problem of the day. It was, unfortunately, a problem concerning which there was widespread misunderstanding, a misunderstanding, however, which in no way prevented the active verbal interference of highly placed people in England, the United States and elsewhere. The solution, when it eventually arrived, was not so much a solution as an abandonment of responsibility, and it has left a legacy of bitterness and distrust throughout the Arab Middle East which is likely to endure, in some form or other, for as many years as the problem itself took to reach its full maturity.

What was this Palestine problem? Reduced to its simplest terms it was a struggle for supremacy in Palestine between the Jews, led by the Jewish Agency on behalf of the World Zionist Organization, and the Arabs, who were usually without responsible leadership but who had, gradually, the backing of the Arab States and, when it was formed, the Arab League. The Zionist organization drew its main support from American Jewry.

Until the end of the second world war the Jews wished to build up inside Palestine a state in which they would have numerical and political supremacy. The more moderate Jews would have accepted a bi-national state, but extreme Zionists always insisted that Palestine must be turned into a Jewish country with an Arab minority. The Arabs appeared ready to tolerate the Jews in Palestine so long as they could retain their old two-to-one numerical superiority, but the steady

growth of Arab nationalism in the surrounding countries, combined with the increasing aggressiveness of Zionism, changed their attitude.

Until the middle of May 1948 Palestine was governed by Great Britain under a mandate confirmed by the League of Nations in 1923. In the early years, despite sporadic outbreaks of trouble caused almost entirely by the Arabs, life in Palestine was reasonably secure and peaceful, and under a better administration than that possessed by the other Middle Eastern countries, assisted by the presence of an industrious, intelligent and progressive Jewish minority, considerable social and economic progress was made. In 1935—for reasons which will emerge later—Arab nationalism began to take a violent form, and from then until the outbreak of the world war, Palestine was in a continual state of disorder, reaching the point of a general Arab insurrection. Various commissions visited the country, both during this period and before, and official British policy was restated in a White Paper issued early in 1939. The main points were that from the beginning of April 1939 until the end of March 1944, 10,000 Jewish immigrants were to be allowed to enter Palestine each year, with an additional 25,000 refugees who would be brought in as and when the High Commissioner was satisfied that certain necessary provisions had been made for their maintenance. On the expiry of those five years, Jewish immigration was to depend upon Arab acquiescence, and a second period of five years would be occupied by the Mandatory in fostering Arab-Jewish co-operation preparatory to the setting up of an independent Palestine state, in which Jews and Arabs would be associated in the government and administration.

The Jews violently opposed the White Paper which, they claimed, would confirm them as a powerless minority: the Arabs also opposed it on much the same grounds as the Jews, that it would make them share with others a country which was their own, but later they changed their minds and would have been willing to accept.

The conflicting claims by Jews and Arabs to possession of Palestine were a legacy of muddle-headed, opportunist and, in some ways, deceitful British policy during the war of 1914-1918, when, for various reasons and also, to be fair, impelled sometimes by power politics not entirely their own, they appeared to have promised Palestine to both Jew and Arab. In actual fact both sets of promises were sufficiently vague and ambiguous to leave a loophole, and it

can be argued that Britain promised the *whole* of the country to neither.

The Arab claim, in short—the full story would fill a book—was based upon undertakings given to the late King Husain of the Hijaz, then leader of the Arabs, for the establishment of an Arab kingdom after the war as a reward for an Arab revolt against their former Turkish masters, then siding with Germany in the war against England. The Arabs claimed that Palestine was included in the agreement: British statesmen have refuted this. Zionists based their claim to Palestine upon the famous Balfour Declaration which said, in part, that:

‘His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.’

The point of contention in this undertaking, which the Jews never gave them full rights to Palestine, was the article ‘a’ before national home: Zionists frequently misrepresented the wording to read ‘the National Home’.

The declaration continues:

‘it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.’

News of the Balfour Declaration exploded like a bomb in King Husain’s headquarters where the Arab revolt was being directed, and he sought reassurances as to the British Government’s intentions. This was given orally by Commander Hogarth, one of the heads of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, who was sent by the British Government to inform King Husain that, ‘Jewish settlement in Palestine would only be allowed in so far as would be consistent with the political and economic freedom of the Arab population.’

There is a wide difference between the ‘civil and religious rights’ of the Balfour Declaration and the ‘political and economic freedom’ of the Hogarth undertaking.

Those vital and seemingly conflicting pledges were endlessly debated and were the foundations upon which the dispute which

caused so much bloodshed and suffering was built, until the United Nations swept them both aside and applied, with results which are now apparent, their own solution. Before that happened, however, the British Government contended that their undertaking to the Jews, to facilitate the foundation of 'a national home in Palestine', had been fulfilled—a contention strenuously denied by the Zionists. British promises to the Arabs, on the other hand, were in no way fulfilled. In the place of the Arab nation to which leaders of the Arab revolt aspired, and which they argue was promised them, are still a handful of small Arab States, all free and independent but still suffering from the arbitrary carving up of the former Arab Empire.

It is all old history now, for Israel has been born and, if not exactly thriving, will certainly not be allowed to expire. This does not alter the fact that the countries who so gaily acted as midwives might not have taken so active a part in the birth had they had a better understanding of its parentage.

One of the greatest obstacles to a balanced understanding of the Palestine problem was always the loose use of the term 'Arab' to describe the non-Jewish element in the dispute. In actual-fact, while linguistically, and on grounds of religion, culture and tradition, the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine—now nearly all homeless and countryless refugees—were of the Arab race, they were before everything Palestinians. They were not the nomadic desert Arab, wandering from country to country throughout the Middle East and making forays on the settled lands. That would be a true enough picture of the Arabs of the Islamic conquest, but even they did not assimilate or displace the original dwellers on the land. Their numbers were not great enough for this. The Army with which Omar conquered Palestine in the first years of the Moslem era (in the seventh century) did not amount to more than 10,000. To these were added a few thousand of the Christian Beduin of the Syrian desert, who accepted Islam and joined up with Omar's forces for the sheer love of fighting and the prospect of booty. The people who continued to live in the cities, to cultivate the land and to carry on the life of the country were the descendants of the original inhabitants—a mixture of Phoenicians, Canaanites, Greeks and Jews, but mainly the first two peoples. These largely accepted Islam, wholly adopted the Arabic language and script, and, to a considerable extent, the Arab culture

and social system. The Palestinian Arab of pre-Israel times, who pushed his ancient plough in the Vale of Esdraelon or Shaaron, was the direct descendant of the man who tilled those same plains before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees. And living alongside of him were Palestinian Jews whose ancestors, the Children of Israel, invaded the land some three thousand years ago, but, like the later Arab invader, never wholly absorbed the population. They remained chiefly in the mountains where they established their capital, and the people of the plains resisted assimilation. Even so, their rule was broken and incoherent and their limited numbers are shown by the fact that the Babylonians could remove them to Mesopotamia and, years after, the Romans could almost extirpate them from the country. But the Diaspora did not leave a desert behind it : life went on with a population adequate for all needs. The Romans did not bring in large numbers of immigrants to fill a depopulated country ; there were still the same stock as was to be found until 1948, though modified a little by the Crusading influence. Remnants are still there to-day, a patient but not very virile agricultural population fated through the centuries by reason of their geographical position and racial characteristics to be conquered and exploited by race after race, but never absorbed. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Palestine was again overrun by an invader, this time the Turk, and the country remained under his domination until liberated by the British in 1917. He left even less mark than earlier conquerors, for he found a more compact country with definite national characteristics.

The Palestinian problem was created after the first world war, when two racial movements were reborn, almost simultaneously. The Arabs, liberated at last from the Turkish yoke, wished to re-create, territorially at least, part of the great Arab Empire which had at one time extended from the Iberian Peninsula in the west, along the southern shores of the Mediterranean, to the banks of the Indus and the Aral Sea in the east. It had, after the Moslem conquest, included what was known until 1948 as Palestine. The liberation was, however, more than merely political : freed from Turkish domination which had kept them politically subjugated and intellectually and socially backward, the Arab leaders had dreams of an Arab renaissance. At the same time, in a desire to escape persecution in Russia and Poland, and to own a land of their own where they would be free from danger

and humiliation, the Zionists intensified their efforts to settle Jews in Palestine, a land, not more theirs than the Arabs', but which from its unbreakable ties with the founder of their religion, they regarded as their homeland, a land in which they would not be foreigners but natives.

On the assumption that 'possession is nine points in the law', the Arab had far greater claim to Palestine than the Jew, for he had been in uninterrupted occupation for nearly thirteen hundred years, but in view of the mixed parentage of the inhabitants of Palestine, the peace and amity in which the basic elements in the population had lived through the centuries and the deep religious associations the country had for Arab and Jew alike, not to mention Christian, it seemed possible to create, inside an Arab Palestine, a Jewish National Home. That was, presumably, the intention behind Britain's apparently divergent promises: it may be, on the other hand, that such an intention was the outcome of those promises, a method of making the best of a bad situation.

In those days the Jewish population was about 80,000, the Zionist immigration having begun in 1880. There were some 600,000 Arabs. The area of Palestine is 10,429 square miles, and so even with a population of only 700,000, it was not seriously under-populated, particularly as great tracts of it are barren and ostensibly uncultivated land. There was, however, plenty of room for more people, and so Britain was granted a mandate by the League of Nations under which she undertook to secure the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, to facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions, and to encourage close settlement by Jews on the land. At the same time the Mandate imposed upon Britain the obligation:

'to safeguard the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine irrespective of race and religion, and, whilst facilitating Jewish immigration and settlement, to ensure that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced.'

In enlarging upon its policy in Palestine the British Government, in 1922, clearly stated that Jewish immigration could not be 'so great in volume as to exceed whatever may be the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals', and added that it was essential 'that immigrants . . . should not deprive any section

of the present population of their employment'. It was later made clear, however, that 'economic capacity' was not the only criterion; immigration which had a damaging effect on the political position of the country was equally dangerous as that which strained the economic structure.

Great and catastrophic changes have taken place since the days when the Palestinian Mandate was granted. The advent of Nazism, having as the main plank in its programme the persecution of the Jews, led to a modern exodus, with frantic and terrorized Jews seeking vainly to escape the dismemberment and annihilation which closed round them in Hitlerized Europe. Naturally their eyes turned to their national home, to Palestine, and the doors were opened to them. Immigration figures which had been 2713 in 1927, 2178 in 1928, 5249 in 1929, 4944 in 1930, 4075 in 1931, rose to 9553 in 1932, and shot up to 30,327 in 1933, 42,359 the next year, and reached their peak of 61,854 in 1935. The population of Palestine in 1944 was 1,655,849, of whom 478,449 were Jews and 1,177,400 non-Jews. Of the latter 98 per cent. were Arabic speaking, 96 per cent. were natives of Palestine, and 1,105,816 would be described as Arabs.

The immigration movement, even in pre-Hitler days, had been organized by the Zionist Organization, and immigrants were liberally supplied with funds (raised, mainly, in the United States) and, in pursuance of the land settlement policy, were rapidly acquiring Arab land. Palestine was in those days a poverty-stricken country and many Arabs, largely absentee landlords, were foolishly ready to part with their heritage. By 1936, however, the more far-sighted among the Palestinians were seriously alarmed at the course events were taking. The world-wide situation of the Jews was growing daily more terrible, and it was clear that countless thousands would seek refuge from their persecutors, and although they would be ready to go anywhere where they would be safe, Palestine would be the goal of the majority. There had always been some opposition to the influx of Jewish immigrants, but it was not really until 1936 that the Arabs as a whole rose in opposition, and there were bloody disorders, which were repeated in 1938. In the two decades between the granting of the Mandate and the outbreak of the last war the Mandatory Power, realizing that its policy was not entirely successful, had sent various Commissions to Palestine, none of which had produced any

result acceptable to the inhabitants. These various situations had led to the unsuccessful Round Table Conference at the beginning of 1939, and the consequent White Paper in which, failing any measure of agreement between Arab and Jew, the Mandatory Power defined its definite policy for the future of Palestine.

Hardly had the two communities opened their campaign against the White Paper than the war broke out and prevented its implementation ; and by the end of the war there were 30,000 of the permitted 75,000 immigrants still to enter the Holy Land. The number of Jewish refugees was by now extremely large and it was not long before the full quota had been filled—and there remained tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, rotting away in camps in Europe. The war had indeed changed the entire situation. Had the result of the Allied victory over Nazism been, as some people had expected in the early days of the conflict, a slow return to normal of a world brutalized and ravaged by Hitlerian doctrines, the Jewish problem in Palestine might never have become acute, for a large proportion of the Central European Jews who had fled from the Hitler terror had every intention of returning to their own countries once it had been overcome. But conditions remained entirely abnormal, and instead of Jews emigrating again from Palestine, the Zionist movement intensified its campaign to get in ever more ; further, with the backing particularly of American Jewry but also of Jews all over the world, Zionists were now determined that at all costs Palestine was to become a Jewish state, and from the end of 1944 onwards all their efforts were concentrated upon that goal.

PALESTINE : 1945-1947

FROM 1945 onwards Palestine was in the grip of internal tension which rose to a climax as the British Mandate drew to a close and which has never since entirely relaxed. The decision taken by the General Assembly on 29th November 1947, that the report of their Special Commission should be adopted and that Palestine should be partitioned between Jews and Arabs, was the signal for the terrorist campaign the Jews had been waging against the forces of the Government to explode into a civil war between the two factions. When the Mandate was formally, hurriedly and peevishly relinquished at the end of May 1948, the State of Israel came into being, and civil war turned into an international war. That, too, came to an end, but its repercussions are still bedevilling the Middle East and real peace is still as far away as ever. When the history of the post-war decade can be regarded in its proper perspective and from a reasonable distance of time, it will probably be realized that the Palestine question was immeasurably the most important issue in the Middle East and hastened and consolidated incipient Arab nationalism. It resulted in a deeper and more genuine dislike, even hatred, of Britain and the United States, twin midwives, in Arab minds, of the infant State of Israel, than had existed before ; and let there be no mistake, the popular old bromide about the Arabs at heart liking the British is sheer nonsense : the British may have been admired and respected but they were never liked. Now, thanks, basically, to our handling of the Palestine problem and the ease with which we gave in to American pressure—to American policy dictated by a Jewish-inspired public opinion—respect and admiration have disappeared.

There is no doubt that immediately after the war world sympathy was on the side of the Jews. It can be argued that terrible as were Jewish sufferings at the hands of the Nazis, they were no worse than those of any other section of the community which refused to toe the Nazi line. It is probable that Nazi murder gangs slaughtered more non-Jewish Poles and Russians, for instance, than Jews. But

the persecution of the Jews started before the war, as an instrument of policy, was more widespread and was infinitely more publicized ; the millions of other people who suffered because of the Nazi madness did so, in a way, incidentally ; Jewish suffering was inflicted coldly and deliberately. The victims, too, were more concentrated and thus, in Palestine, practically every Jewish family had lost either one or two members or practically the entire family had been wiped out leaving one or two survivors. It is perhaps callous and inhuman to suggest that this enormous suffering was capitalized, but, in fact, it was put to its fullest use by the Zionist leaders, grouped mainly in Palestine and the United States, who were determined to build up a Jewish state in Palestine at whatever the cost, by whatever the methods used.

The Arabs, on the other hand, had suffered less than any other peoples from Hitlerism or war : some had indeed grown fat on the pickings which accrued to people who participated in the profits of war but avoided any of the crippling costs. A wave of unparalleled prosperity washed over the Middle East, and if because of the effective controls imposed by a British administration the Palestine Arabs did not amass the huge fortunes made by their fellows in Egypt, the Lebanon and elsewhere, they enjoyed a spell of steady, well-paid employment and disposed of everything they could grow or make at pleasantly profitable prices. Their 'war effort' was negligible. Very few joined the fighting forces ; their country was the theatre of no warlike action. Their leader, however, Hajj Amin el Husaini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, added further ignominy in the eyes of the world to his already sufficiently tarnished record by going over to the Germans and giving them whatever, fortunately insignificant, active assistance he could. If there is any justification to be found for Hajj Amin's wartime activities, it is that he and his equally inept fellow leaders of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee considered themselves in 1939 at 'war' with the British.

Directly the war receded from the Middle East, tension began to increase in Palestine. Various Jewish organizations which had at the beginning of hostilities 'unanimously agreed to put aside their differences with British policy' recommenced their activities and Palestine Jewry began its secret preparations for 'their own fight', which Mr. Ben Gurion had told them on 20th March 1943 might

start when the world war ended. The implacable hatred of the British which was slowly nurtured in so many young Jewish hearts at this time, and which has never been eradicated, is a curious psychological phenomenon. It was not the Germans, who were inflicting such intolerable misery upon the Jewish race, but the British, who were ruining themselves, possibly permanently, in their fight against Hitler and all that he stood for, who were the targets for this blazing hatred because they were unable and, for perfectly valid security reasons, unwilling, to facilitate the entry into Palestine of the relatively exceedingly few Jews who at this time were able to escape from German-dominated Europe.

To be able to obtain a slight, if somewhat dazed, understanding of all that was to follow, it is necessary to consider Palestine as it appeared to the eye of any averagely observant member of the huge Allied armies who visited the country during the war. Palestine was administered by not many more than one hundred Colonial Office officials—apart from the police where the number of British personnel was considerably higher—with Jews and Arabs in subordinate posts. The number of locally recruited officials, however, was slowly increasing as more men became trained, as was the seniority of the positions which they could and did hold. It was clear that the standard of living was infinitely higher than in the adjoining Arab countries. Nowhere in the Mandated territory, either among Jews or Arabs, were there such extremes of wealth and poverty as in Egypt, the Lebanon, and even Syria. The Jews had their own way of life and, on the whole, their own towns, villages and settlements, and except for the early Zionists who, in the true sense of the Zionist movement, had settled on the land and had become assimilated and practically indistinguishable from their Semitic fellow-countrymen, remained an alien race in this ancient Arab land. It was amongst the Arabs—the Palestinians in fact—that the visitor from the other Middle Eastern countries noticed the wide difference in living conditions. The thick-walled, clean little stone cottages of the mountain villages, even the Beduin encampments in the Jordan Valley and the desert areas around Gaza, had a cheerful, contented look rare indeed in the squalid poverty of other Arab countries. Excellent roads ran across the country—and not, as in most of the Middle East, only in the capital cities—while the main cities, Jerusalem, a little gem, Haifa,

Jaffa even, had good modern buildings and an atmosphere of cleanliness and planning. The intensely cultivated green belt along the coast, with its unending citrus plantations, its multitude of trees, its little farms, and its olive groves and vineyards indicated the care and attention not only of the mixed Arab and Jewish owners, but also of the Government.

Although many parts of Palestine, the hill regions and the coastal belt, for example, have a heavier rainfall than almost anywhere in the Middle East, most of the country depends for its perennial cultivation on a carefully planned irrigation scheme. The Jewish Agency—the body which before the emergence of Israel spoke for the Jews of Palestine and was in fact a government within a government—continually complained that the Mandatory Power's irrigation projects were too limited; they produced a succession of experts to show that the productive capacity of the country could be doubled, trebled, quadrupled, were various scheme adopted. Experience in the years since the termination of the Mandate seem to supply some proof that the more moderate of the schemes might have been of benefit to Palestine, but the Mandatory Government had to consider the economic aspect of any project—which is not the case to-day in a country whose entire economy is operated on American subsidies. Despite a certain limited vision and somewhat strained resources due to heavy 'security' expenditure, the Palestine Government—and that includes not only the British officials, advisers, experts, etc., but also the British-trained Jewish and Arab staff—was infinitely more competent than the administrations of any of the surrounding countries, and Palestine was an extremely well-run little country.

In spite of the large-scale Jewish immigration since the middle thirties, Palestine had no real unemployment problem. In addition to the requirements of its native agriculture, the war produced a heavy demand upon manpower from the Allied forces and also from a spate of small light industries which then grew up. An inevitable consequence of the war was the practically total disappearance throughout the Middle East of the bulk of consumer goods, formerly imported from England, Europe, and the United States. Many countries opened small factories to try to replace the vanished imports, but Palestine, where amongst the Jewish community were numbers of skilled European technicians, workmen and scientists, was particularly well

placed, and production was begun on a relatively large scale. The results were disappointing—if profitable. For a variety of reasons, some inevitable, such as absence of proper machinery or good class raw materials, and others, such as the falsity of the whole Jewish economy in Palestine, which could have been avoided, none of the wartime products was wholly satisfactory, none would for a moment have stood up to competition from the pre-war imports: they were, in addition, extremely expensive. But these local industries absorbed all the men and women who could be spared from, or who could avoid, employment in any of the ancillary branches of the fighting forces. As the war moved away and the base depots and workshops dwindled, men, Arabs as well as Jews, who had been trained by the Army were readily absorbed into the fast-expanding electrical equipment, building and other industries.

In education, too, Palestine easily led the way. Although the educational facilities available for the Arab section of the population were severely criticized by the Peel Commission and indeed almost every expert who visited the country, there were far more Arab children in schools in Palestine in proportion to the total Arab population than in any other Moslem country. Naturally the Jews, who operated their own schools on a combination of government grants and subsidies from all the various Jewish organizations, had a far more complete educational system, and it was by taking this as a measuring-stick that experts criticized what the Government were doing for the Arabs. Yet the degree of literacy amongst the Palestine Arabs was so high that it is generally admitted in the Arab States to-day that the Palestinian is far better educated than other Arabs and far more capable of absorbing technical training of all kinds.

The Palestine that British troops and other visitors saw in the closing years of the war and the immediate post-war period was, despite ominous rumbles premonitory of the coming storm, a pleasant, well-run progressive country, a model in nearly every way for the shabby rest of the Middle East. If it had been possible eventually to hand over Palestine to an administration of Jews and Arabs working harmoniously together, Palestine could have become the leader of the Middle East. But harmony was impossible: except for a few brief periods it had never existed, and the Nazism which imperilled the very existence of the Jewish race and inspired Zionist leaders to

the ultimate heights of ruthless determination to found a Jewish state where Jews from all over the world could be safe not only from fear, persecution, and a horrible death, but also from any kind of discrimination, spelled also the end of Palestine. The pity is that the Jewish homeland had to be Palestine.

That it had to be Palestine was due to two reasons. In the first place, Palestine was the cradle of Jewry, and although it had in fact been an Arab country for 1300 years, it was always to the Promised Land that religious and sincere Jews all over the world turned their eyes in longing. In the second, conflicting promises made by the British Government during the first world war, when they appeared to have promised Palestine to both Jews and Arabs, had enabled Zionists to support their dreams by this vague and, as time went by, misrepresented promise. Had it not been for Hitler, however, the issue might never have been pressed home, for until large-scale persecution of the Jews began in 1933, it was extremely difficult, mainly for financial reasons, for the Zionist leaders to find sufficient Jews anxious to emigrate to Palestine to fill even the moderate quotas then permitted by the Mandatory Power. As the wave of terror spread from one European country to another, the movement gained momentum, reaching its peak in 1935 when 61,854 Jews were officially registered as having entered Palestine legally. Immigration, continued on a decreasing scale until in 1939, as a result of the violence of Arab protests and the state of near civil war then existing in Palestine, the British Government restated their policy in the now famous White Paper. The war interrupted the implementation of this plan. Not only was emigration from wartime Europe extremely difficult, but normal security considerations made it difficult for the Allied authorities to permit any Jew who declared he had 'escaped' from German-dominated territories to enter the main Allied Middle East base through a convenient Palestinian doorway. It is probable that amongst the immigrants who did manage to reach the haven of Palestine and who out of sheer humanity could not be turned away, were a number of enemy spies and agents. There were also a number of Communists, for not only was Soviet Russia a wartime ally but the Communist Party possessed the only truly efficient underground organization in central and south-eastern Europe, capable of providing

the funds, the conducted parties, the false papers, and indeed all the necessary complicated apparatus of escape from Hitler's Europe. In any case the total number of immigrants who managed to reach Palestine during the peak years of the war was small. Nevertheless, by 1945 the immigration quota fixed in 1939 was declared to have been filled and it was then decided that 1500 Jews could enter each month. This brought particularly violent protests from the Jewish authorities, who claimed first that they had an absolute right to bring into their 'National Home' as many Jews as they wished, especially as no other country was ready to admit 'an effective number' of the poor wretched refugees, the relics of concentration camps and prisons, many of them by then stateless. To these protestations they joined a savage condemnation of the British Government for having caused the deaths of tens of thousands of Jews who could have been saved had not the British authorities closed the doors of Palestine during the war.

No less violent protests came from the Arabs who blamed the British for having built up 'an alien force in our midst' and who fought strenuously but, at this time, only verbally, against any further immigration. The pre-war Arab leaders, the Mufti and his equally futile lieutenants, were still either in hiding or places of detention, and the Arab leadership inside Palestine, although weakened by the organized assassinations and terror operated by the Mufti and his close followers against dissident Arab leaders in the years before the outbreak of the war, was in more reasonable hands. The Palestine Arabs, in a remarkable gesture of compassion and comprehension, agreed to accept the Jews already in the country but set their faces firmly against any further immigration.

And so Palestine approached its crisis.

The Zionist organizations had left nothing to chance. They hoped that the new Labour Government which, out of office, had shown considerable sympathy for their cause, would, back in office, implement the somewhat rash promises emitted from time to time by individual Labour leaders. But they were far too shrewd to place too much faith in the words of ambitious office-seeking politicians, and they had their alternative plans ready. They realized that time would be an important factor and that it would be necessary to speed the immigration of Jews into Palestine while world sympathy for the

victims of Nazism was still warm and while the post-war refugee problem was still a major issue. With the British Government having, in response to Arab opposition, strictly limited the numbers of legal immigrants, illegal immigration was to be pushed to quite extraordinary, carefully organized lengths. The organization was built up well before the end of the war and it was for this purpose that a number of key men and women were obliged by the Jewish Agency to enter the Jewish Brigade, formed after strong Jewish pressure, and other units of the Allied armies. Some of them were to be trained for underground activities in Palestine, others because the Jewish leaders realized even then that a practically regular Jewish Army would one day be needed. The Jewish Brigade ended the war in Italy. Many of the officers and men were naturally and easily given permission to visit towns and villages where their relatives had lived, to see whether any had escaped the death chambers, and while they travelled around Europe they established the organization which was later to send thousands of Jews illegally to the Holy Land. Similar work was carried out in refugee camps and other centres by social workers, U.N.R.R.A. officials and members of official Zionist organizations.

Whilst this vast illegal immigration was being planned outside Palestine, terrorist organizations were getting ready for action inside the country. Stores of arms and ammunition were built up, some by purchase, others from the supplies issued to the Jewish troops, but the bulk by theft. A careful study was made of the inner workings of the Palestine Government, with particular regard to the security forces, the police and the army, and trained 'intelligence officers' or, more simply, spies, were placed in every important department, so that during the years between the end of the war and the end of the Mandate, the Jewish leaders were enabled to be always just one move ahead of the perplexed and baffled Government. Boastful revelations made after the birth of the State of Israel proclaimed that practically everything that happened between 1945 and 1948 was part of an impressive over-all plan drawn up certainly by what were then called the underground leaders but of which the main outlines were known to the officially recognized leaders of Palestine Jewry. There was, however, one Jewish organization which, anyway prior to the outbreak of civil war between Jews and Arabs, acted on its own and

whose savagery was condemned by most Jews. This was the Stern Gang—the only terrorist organization which continued its activities throughout most of the war. It had broken away from the larger but slightly less extreme group, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, in October 1939, and had been engaged in terrorist activities since its leader, Abraham Stern, was released from prison in June 1940. In February 1942 Stern himself was killed after a series of robberies and murders in the Tel Aviv area, and the gang seemed to have been disrupted. But in November 1944 they committed the first of a series of resounding crimes which continued until they reached their culminating point in the murder of Count Folke Bernadotte, United Nations Mediator for Palestine, in September 1948. This was the assassination in Cairo of Lord Moyne, British Minister of State in the Middle East, a charming gentle little man, who was shot dead by two young Jews as his car approached the gates of his house beside the River Nile. Like all the Stern Gang's outrages, and almost all the acts of terrorism committed by the Jews, this was a cold-blooded, callous and calculated crime. They had nothing whatsoever against Lord Moyne personally, though he was believed to have advocated, when at the Colonial Office, the resettlement of Jews in Germany. The motive of the murder, as freely admitted by the assassins in the Cairo Court before which they were tried, was to draw the world's attention to the Jewish case. Even this motive failed, as the Anglo-Egyptian censorship prevented full publication of the murderers' statements, and Lord Moyne died, as did so many other Englishmen, notable or humble, senselessly, and even from the viewpoint of the Jewish terrorists, uselessly.

In the years which were to follow the question frequently arose as to what degree of support the terrorists, the Stern Gang or the other less deliberately fiendish groups, received from the Yishuv (the Jewish population of Palestine) as a whole and from the responsible Jewish organizations, such as the Jewish Agency. There can be no doubt at all in the minds of people who lived and worked in the tormented Holy Land during the fading years of the Mandate that the majority of Jews stood solidly behind the terrorists. There were various reasons. In the first place, there was at work that extraordinary Jewish solidarity born, probably, of centuries of persecution. Another factor was the universal feeling, active in some, sub-conscious in others, that so much

Jewish blood had been spilled, so many tens of thousands of Jews slaughtered, that Jewish blood was now sacred, and whatever he did a Jew must never be seriously punished, certainly not delivered up to a possibility of execution. There was also the realization that acts of terrorism, which achieved all the world notoriety peaceful protests failed to obtain, was a means, possibly now the only means, of bringing the Jewish case before world, and most particularly American, public opinion. And finally there was the knowledge that in the long run all British governments capitulated to force when the only other answer seemed to be the use of similar force. These sentiments, or a combination of some of them, assured terrorists almost complete immunity so far as their fellow Jews were concerned. From time to time, as a matter of policy, the Agency or some other body of responsible Jews, issued half-hearted condemnation of acts of terrorism, but on the whole :

‘ as the growing audacity and ruthlessness of the terrorists became more apparent with each new stroke, the dominant note of the Jewish community became one of greater complacency towards these displays of the organization and strength of the armed forces of the Yishuv.’ (Palestine Government’s *Survey of Palestine*, prepared for the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.)

Certainly there are very few known instances of any Jew having given information to the authorities which would lead to the apprehension of any terrorist : cover, shelter, alibis, etc., were, however, readily forthcoming. This, added to the presence of terrorist agents in all the offices of the security forces, police, military, justice, etc., allowed the thugs themselves to continue their activities without serious fear of apprehension.

The Stern Gang set up an illegal mobile broadcasting station which proved extremely difficult to track down, and from then on instructions and exhortations to the Jewish community and warnings and threats to the ‘ British occupiers ’ were issued in a daily stream. They recruited terrorists from Europe, particularly men who had learned ‘ tough tactics ’ in the hard training schools of resistance movements in Poland, Germany, France, and elsewhere. They continued to build up their arsenals and they raised funds either by robbery or by the blackmailing or terrorism of their richer compatriots.

The Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Military Organization) was the main terrorist group, from which the Stern Gang had broken away mainly because its methods were too mild for the fanatical Stern and his immediate followers. Their activities had the same object, direction, and were of a similar kind, but killing was incidental and not a deliberate act of policy. As time went by the Irgun became almost equally ruthless, and in the long run they were responsible for far more British lives than the smaller Stern Gang.

Hagana (Defence), an off-shoot of a body known as Hashomer (Watchmen) which was formed to protect Jews in Tsarist Russia, was the Jewish Agency's semi-official illegal army. 'It played a substantial part', says the *Survey of Palestine*, 'in beating off Arab attacks on Jewish property during the rebellion of 1936-1939 and, through the medium of the Jewish Agency, selected units were provided and trained by British officers to assist in maintaining public security, the guarding of vulnerable points and in guerilla warfare.' After the war, however, when Jewish attacks were directed against the Palestine Government, the Agency denied all responsibility for, and usually all knowledge of, Hagana. At the end of hostilities in 1945 Hagana was organized as an embryonic army, officered by men who had been trained in the Jewish Brigade, and having a total mobilizable strength of around seventy thousand men and women. When the Mandate ended it emerged openly as the Jewish Army. Until that time it claimed to be purely defensive, and the Jewish community became seriously angry when it was termed a terrorist organization. Yet its members, particularly the Palmach or Striking Force, indulged in widespread acts of sabotage, played a large part in the illegal immigration operations and worked sometimes in close co-operation with the out-and-out terrorists. It was an extremely efficient organization, basing itself, curiously, on the British Army, using British Army methods and equipment (most of it stolen) and having agents and members in the principal European cities and ports.

The centre of all Jewish activity was the Jewish Agency for Palestine, whose fortress-like offices were built on one of Jerusalem's lovely hills, with an impressive view over the Holy City. The Agency was the official, fully recognized body representing the Jews of Palestine, with an Executive Committee, which was in fact the Jewish Cabinet, a large body of officials, who became the Israeli

Civil Service, and its future army, Hagana. It levied taxes on the Yishuv and ran its own schools, hospitals and public health services, superintended Jewish agriculture, trade and commerce. It maintained close relations with Zionist organizations everywhere, but particularly in America, was undoubtedly an active partner in the bringing into Palestine of thousands of illegal immigrants and controlled all legal Jewish immigration. The Agency was at continual loggerheads with the Palestine Government, and the superior, condescending and at the same time exigent attitude of the quick-witted, active and yet insensitive men who ran it continually infuriated the somewhat slower minds of the Colonial officials who, within their limitations, were doing so fine a job in such utterly impossible conditions. In parenthesis, it is questionable whether officials whose previous service had usually been in Nigeria, on the Gold Coast or in some similar colony with primitive peoples and primitive problems, were by outlook or training the right type of men to deal with the Europeanized Jews of Palestine.

While the Jewish community was a close-knit, expertly organized body, making minute preparations for the achievement of their national aims, the Palestine Arabs were divided, unorganized and unprepared. They had suffered in the pre-war years from inept leadership and in that respect lost ground was never recovered. In April 1936 a body known as the Arab Higher Committee had been formed under the presidency of the Mufti of Jerusalem, which ultimately directed the Arab revolt. Its methods were a pale shadow of those the Jews were later to use so effectively, but they were unpopular with a number of responsible Arabs who indeed, in those days, felt no burning animosity to the Jews and foresaw no valid threat to the existence of the Palestine Arab community. Thus gradually the anger of the Mufti and his followers was turned against the moderate Arabs and a campaign of terrorism and murder was waged against them. The Arab cause lost many notable men in the bloody days between 1936-39, and others who escaped the assassin's bullet or knife retired in disgust from public life, never, in some cases, to return. After the war the Arabs were still divided and in the true sense of the word, leaderless. A new Arab Higher Committee was got together when the seriousness of the situation became apparent, under the presidency of Jamal Husaini, a cousin of the Mufti, who had been exiled by the British Government in 1941 after being arrested

in Persia whence he had fled after the abortive revolt of Rashid Ali el Kilaini in Iraq, in which both Jamal and the Mufti took part. The Mufti got away to Germany where he placed his services, for what they were worth, at the disposal of Hitler. It is one of the great tragedies of the Palestine Arabs that whilst they are generally recognized to be better educated, more intelligent and in many ways of much better 'material' than most of their Middle East brethren, they were never able to weld themselves and their countrymen into an effective unit. As the days of crisis approached the Arab Higher Committee lacked money, support, both inside the country and in the other Arab States, organization and unity. Leaving aside, for the moment, the entry into the Palestine issue of the other Arab countries, in Palestine itself ill-organized, unruly groups of Arabs were faced by a powerful, efficient and utterly ruthless machine: there was never any question of the result.

As the year 1945 drew to an end storm-clouds gathered thickly over Palestine. The Jews were, in effect, in unofficial armed revolt against the Government of Palestine whilst they awaited the announcement of a change of policy by Whitehall. They were already certain of eventual success in obtaining at the very least the opening wide of the doors of Palestine to all the immigrants they wished to bring in; and they knew that the larger became the Jewish population, the greater their chances of forming their own state. It is doubtful whether at this time they foresaw the extent of their not so far distant success: Israel was probably still an ultimate hope, not a possible reality. They were confident of support, political, moral and financial, from the United States. This was of paramount importance and was the decisive factor in the emergence of the State of Israel. Successful acts of terrorism, mild still when judged by the standards set later, and a slow but constant stream of illegal immigrants gave the Jewish leaders additional confidence. At the same time it aroused grave doubts in the minds of the British officials trying to control the situation about the advisability of allowing large numbers of stateless Jews from Europe to enter Palestine. The Palestine Government felt they could have controlled the situation at this point had it not been for irresponsible interference from the United States wherever increasing pressure was being placed upon the Government by the disproportionately powerful Jewish community. American officials

in the Middle East were then, as now, against this active American intervention, and against the creation of a Jewish state in the heart of the Arab Middle East. They foresaw the unending difficulties this would create with the Arab lands—the rich oil-bearing lands so necessary now to Western economy. Their warnings and their opinions were disregarded by Washington, where the immediate power of the Jewish vote was of greater urgency than the distant beating of an Arab drum.

In August 1945 President Truman wrote to Mr. Attlee asking that 100,000 stateless and homeless Jews from Europe be admitted immediately into Palestine. On superficial grounds of humanity, a humanity which considered only the plight of the tragic Jewish refugees, there was a great deal to support this plea, although it ignored the other side of the problem. In addition, if saving Jewish refugees was the only consideration, an alternative put forward by the Palestine Arab Higher Committee and backed by the Arab League, that Palestine would be willing to accept its quota of Jewish refugees if other countries did the same, was tactfully disregarded. The British Government's reply was to suggest that the United States should nominate representatives to a joint Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry into the situation in Palestine. This suggestion was accepted, and while the Committee was being formed and briefed, the Palestine Government compiled for their guidance an exhaustive two-volume *Survey of Palestine*, which, incidentally, contains an imposing mass of factual, background, and statistical information on Palestine from the beginning to nearly the end of the British Mandate. The Committee arrived in Palestine in February 1946 and its report was issued at the end of April. It made a thorough investigation into conditions in the Holy Land, where terrorist activities were wisely suspended during its presence. The Jewish propaganda services went into action with enthusiasm and vigour and Jewish leaders made the most of the opportunity. The Arabs, on the other hand, appeared bewildered and uncertain of themselves, and their kind of bumbling honesty made an impression only on those members of the Committee who were trying to approach their task with open-mindedness. Had the Committee's brief been to judge between the respective merits of Palestine's two rival communities, they would obviously have voted unanimously in favour of the Jews, who could

clearly do so much for and with Palestine—in some cases, nearly as much as they claimed. The Arabs had no programme, no ideas beyond their usual blank refusal to accept anything any one else proposed; they were patently backward, unprogressive and on the whole unproductive. The British Government did not materially help matters by emitting, through the medium of the then Foreign Secretary, Mr. Bevin, the perfectly fair but completely unrealistic opinion that any proposals for the final solution of the Palestine problem must be acceptable to both Jews and Arabs. Had there been a chance in a thousand that Jews and Arabs would have agreed on the future of their country, there would have been no Palestine problem.

The Committee's report was released late in April. It contained ten recommendations of which the most important proposal was the second. This proposed immediate authorization for use 'so far as possible in 1946' of immigration certificates for 100,000 Jewish victims of Nazi oppression. The last article counselled against the use of force and terrorism and called for resumption by the Jewish Agency of active co-operation with the Palestine Government.

The other eight recommendations were ignored in the violent dispute which broke out between the Palestine Government, the Jews and the Arabs concerning these two vital clauses. The Government immediately made the point that they considered recommendations two and ten to be complementary: in other words, immigration depended upon the dissolution of all terrorist organizations. The Jews wanted the immigration suggestion implemented immediately, and the Arabs followed their usual course of loudly and flatly turning down the entire set of proposals. But the Anglo-American Committee's visit to Palestine, the behaviour there of certain of its members, and then the recommendations themselves at last sounded alarm bells in the neighbouring Arab States. From this time onwards the Palestine question ceased to be confined within the boundaries of Palestine itself.

The first meeting of the Arab League took place at Bloudan, a summer resort in the hills a few miles from Damascus, in October 1947. The result was nothing more than greatly talked about 'secret' resolutions, which rumour placed anywhere between an all-out combined declaration of war against the West and a decision to deny

British and American aircraft landing facilities in Middle Eastern countries. There was also some talk of cancelling all Western oil concessions—a move which, had it been seriously and whole-heartedly carried out, might well at least have given America something to think about. The trouble was, of course, that none of the Arab States had any intention of doing itself real harm merely to aid the Palestinian Arabs. Neither Saudi Arabia nor Iraq seriously contemplated throwing away their main sources of income, although Iraq did stop the flow of oil to Haifa and has maintained that gesture, much to the economic disadvantage of Israel, and, through the loss of the great refinery at Haifa, to Europe and Britain as well. The seven Arab States formally agreed that they could not recognize the legality of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry or its recommendations, and just as formally decided to make preparations to meet any Jewish threat to Palestine 'with force'. British and American newspaper correspondents who attended the meeting had their first sight of the Arab League at work—and were not impressed. The entire burden fell upon the shoulders of one man—Abdel Rahman Azzam Pasha, the Secretary-General—and anything he failed to supervise personally, such as, for example, cabling facilities, was a most resounding failure. Lack of such facilities did not seriously matter, however, for accounts of the meeting took second place to the story of the Mufti's escape from France, which occurred at this time, and his reappearance in the Middle East. There is little doubt that anti-British French officials, smarting then as now under the loss of their Levant States, ascribed, as time goes by, entirely to British intrigue, connived at this 'escape': the Arab leaders were entirely in the dark and clearly had nothing to do with it. He was expected to appear at Bloudan and demand a Holy War in Palestine but thought fit to remain in Cairo.

The Conference ended with a few published resolutions, the most important of which was the establishment in Cairo of a Palestine Committee to supervise and co-ordinate the activities of the Arab States in regard to Palestine: this was in fact the setting up of a military headquarters to control the action of the Arab volunteers and, later, the Arab armies. The League were clearly concerned by the unsatisfactory organization of the Palestine Arabs, and a new Arab Higher Committee was then formed under the Presidency of Jamal

Husaini, an honest, moderate but not particularly inspiring leader. Its ill-assorted members were Ahmed Hilmi Pasha, an elderly and respected Palestinian, a banker and economist, of whom practically nothing was heard after this ; Dr. Husein al-Khalidi, a former Mayor of Jerusalem whose family were on rather bad terms with the Husainis. Dr. Khalidi became the Jerusalem spokesman of the Committee and struggled hard against a whole series of adverse conditions, not the least of which was that neither the Arab Higher Committee nor the Palestine Committee ever told him what was happening ; Emile Ghuri, a Christian Arab, Oxford educated, politically ambitious and a fervent supporter of the Mufti. The meeting also decided to intensify the Arab boycott of Jewish goods (from Palestine) ; Jewish goods from anywhere else could be imported as before. In fact the boycott showed up the Arabs for the complete unashamed opportunists they are ; only those people took it seriously who could get nothing out of trading with the Jews. This remained true until the establishment of Israel of itself enforced the boycott which is now fairly complete and is materially assisting towards the slow ruination of the new state. For some time there had been a ban on the sale of Arab land in Palestine to the Jews, who were then buying up all they could. This was in addition to a government regulation issued as a consequence of the 1939 White Paper which set aside certain parts of Palestine in which Jews could not acquire land—a regulation designed to save the Arabs from the consequences of their own greed. The Government's action was strongly resented by the Zionists, who redoubled their efforts to buy up Arab land in those parts of the country where sales were officially permitted, and despite the Arab leaders' edict that no more Arab land was to be sold, sales did indeed take place, the Jews offering as much as seven times the real value of the property. If the transaction became known, the seller's life was in danger and he was likely to be murdered by Arab terrorist organizations which, having lain fallow since the outbreak of the world war, were now active again. If the seller was clever and lucky he concealed all knowledge of his dealings until the cash was safely paid into a bank in some other country—Beirut was a favourite centre—and then he made a bolt for it : sometimes this succeeded.

As the Bloudan Conference was closing, Hagana staged their largest sabotage effort up to that time. Concerted and well-planned

attacks were made on all communications between Palestine and the surrounding countries : bridges were destroyed, roads cut and railway tracks ripped up. Communications were in fact interrupted for several days. This attack was in the nature of a dual warning, to the Palestine Government that unless they allowed the 100,000 Jews to enter the country, they were in for a lot of trouble, and to the Arabs not to underestimate the strength of Jewish resistance had they any intention of putting any of their hostile resolutions into force. A month later Irgun Zvai Leumi, covered by Hagana, blew up the King David Hotel and killed ninety-one people, British, Arabs and Jews, in the worst outrage Palestine had then known. The King David Hotel, in pre-war days one of the finest in the Middle East, was then functioning half as a hotel and half as governmental and military offices. The ground floor was occupied by restaurants, bars and public rooms, and the first two floors were hotel bedrooms. On top of that the Headquarters of the Palestine Command occupied two floors, with the senior departments of the Palestine Government using the entire outjutting left wing as their offices. The police had continually warned the military, who were responsible for the security of the building, that it was utterly unsafe ; with no control on people entering either the hotel or the large basement rooms—kitchens, store-houses, etc.—beneath it, it was quite impossible to guard it from attack. And it must be emphasized that with bomb attacks having been made over the years on scores of other public buildings, including Police Headquarters, the police knew both that the King David was always a possible target and that it would, in existing circumstances, be an easy target. Only the presence of Jews in the hotel and amongst the military and civil staff had probably saved it from an earlier attack. There must always remain doubts as to why the terrorists blew up the King David Hotel in full knowledge of the terrible losses of life it would entail, some of them Jewish. One reason, bruited about in Jewish circles at the time, was that the outrage was retaliation for the Palestine Government's search of the Jewish Agency in an effort to discover evidence of the Agency's associations with the terrorist organizations, and also plans for large-scale illegal immigration ; the search disclosed neither, as any seriously incriminating document had been whisked off to a more secure hiding-place before the search opened. At the same time the Government arrested and detained

in the 'concentration camp' at Latroun several of the Agency officials, including Mosche Shertok (now Sharett), Dr. Joseph and other leaders. This action, which aroused enormous anger amongst the entire Jewish community, obviously called for spectacular retaliation. Even then it seems doubtful whether any group other than the Stern Gang would indulge in wanton large-scale murder. The secret is probably that the Irgun believed that mysterious telephone calls which they caused to be put through to the Palestine Government's Secretariat just before the bombs went off, warning them that the hotel was to be blown up, would result in its evacuation. At the best this was flimsy insurance. In the first place, the timing of the telephone messages was so close to the explosion that it is doubtful whether the hundreds of people occupying the building—and of course the actual location of the explosion was not given—could anyhow have been got out in time. Secondly, it had been a gay little Jewish practice to telephone government departments the information that the premises they occupied were going to be blown up. At first these warnings were taken seriously, and every day Jewry was gratified by the sight of officials of all ranks streaming hurriedly out of a building and waiting about in anxious or irritated little knots in the streets for an explosion that did not take place. So much time and effort was wasted in this manner that gradually the calls came to be ignored.

The operation itself was a classic example of terrorist attack. Members of the gang, dressed as Arabs, drove up to the kitchen entrance of the hotel in a lorry and began unloading goods which included three or four large milk-churns. Despite a police and military guard on the door, no one seems to have taken much notice of what must have been a regular occurrence. Inside the labyrinthine underground passages of the hotel, two terrorists trundled milk-churns along towards the basement beneath the wing occupied by the government offices. This was outside the kitchen province and they were challenged by a British officer, whom they shot dead on the spot. Meanwhile, a small bomb was exploded in the roadway a hundred yards or so distant from the hotel. This effectively distracted attention from events in the hotel itself and enabled the terrorists to get away. At the same time the noise of the explosion drew people in the hotel to the windows of the doomed wing and

indeed probably caused some who would not normally have been in that part of the building to go along to see what was happening and thus increased the loss of life. Then, with an enormous crash, two churnful of T.N.T. exploded. A great mushroom of smoke and dust which could be seen over most of Jerusalem covered the hotel. When this subsided a little, horrified observers saw that the left-hand wing had completely disintegrated and there were great gaping holes in the nearest part to it of the hotel itself. So effective was the explosive charge, so carefully laid, that five stories of rose-coloured Palestine stone erected on modern ferro-concrete base had been sheered off as if cut with a gigantic knife. Many were killed outright, others died a lingering death beneath the great pile of rubble which was dominated by enormous slabs of concrete through which rescue teams had to hack their way with the help of pneumatic drills.

A great wave of anger swept through Palestine's British community, and it is a tribute to the self-control and discipline of the troops and policemen that individual retaliation was only talked about, not put into practice. Sanctimonious professions of horror and sympathy from the Jewish Agency and other official bodies would have been somewhat better received had the Yishuv made the slightest attempt to co-operate with the British authorities in tracking down the perpetrators. The police in fact arrested two young Jews, one of them seriously wounded, who they were convinced had been members of the gang, but in the absence of any co-operation they were unable to obtain any evidence against them and were obliged to let them go. Arab anger was manifested in a curious manner. Great crowds attended the funerals of the Arab victims and these carried banners and chanted slogans attacking not so much the Jews, or the British, as the Americans, and in particular President Truman, without whose backing, it was implied, the Jews would not be in Palestine at all. Arab funeral processions led by bands of frantic ghalabieh-clad young men screaming, in unison, curses, in English, against the American President in which considerable use was made of the now practically ubiquitous expletive popularized by British troops in any part of the world in which they had served, lent a little comic relief to this horrible tragedy.

From this time onwards outrages and official retaliation increased

in frequency. In entirely ineffective efforts to maintain order, to put an end to acts of violence by seizing the implements of violence, settlement after Jewish settlement—usually the colony nearest to the latest outrage—was cordoned off by British troops and searched for arms. Large quantities were discovered, some in the most unlikely places, as, for example, in the neat little wardrobes in the children's nursery, in a cleverly concealed underground chamber beneath a pen in which resided a prize bull, in schools, synagogues, private houses, government offices. But what was discovered was only a fraction of the quantities the Yishuv had amassed against the day of their real fight against the Arabs when the British had gone as, even already it was evident that they would. Official American support for the Zionist movement, American newspaper and public opinion support for the terrorists was already weighing heavily on a sorely tried administration. In Palestine during the years of greatest stress—roughly from May 1946 until May 1948—were a mass of newspaper correspondents from most parts of the world. Some of them tried to do an honest job of objective reporting, but most, and in particular the large American contingent, were openly biased. This was due to two main reasons. In the first place it was the policy of their newspapers to support the Jewish cause. The power wielded in the United States, and in particular in the field of publicity and politics, by the Jewish community was and is immense; there were always Jews ready to go to almost any lengths to support the cause of Zionism, either out of conviction, expediency, or merely because of the traditional support Jews everywhere always give their co-religionists. And there were hundreds of thousands of gentiles who accepted unhesitatingly the flood of extremely clever Jewish propaganda, inspired, to some degree, by the understandable sympathy felt for the Jews after their persecution by the Nazis. An incident in which I was a participant illustrates the cleverness of Jewish propaganda. In 1949 I met in Beirut two elderly American ladies who had been visiting their sons who were serving with the American Military Mission in Turkey. On their way home they wished to visit the Old City of Jerusalem, which is in Arab hands. After some trouble they had flown from Beirut to Amman, motored on to Jerusalem, and were now returning to the United States. They had been apprehensive, but had been impressed by the kindness and courtesy of the Arabs.

‘They were so kind and helpful,’ they told me. ‘It’s extraordinary to think that those nice people could have committed that awful crime of blowing up the King David Hotel and killing all those people in it.’

‘But,’ I said, ‘it was the Jews, not the Arabs, who blew up the hotel.’

‘Oh, no,’ they replied. ‘It was the Arabs. We had a man lecturing in our city and he told us it was the Arabs.’

The second reason was the infinite cleverness of Jewish propaganda and public relations services in Palestine and the abysmal stupidity and obstructionism of the Arabs. Every possible facility was placed at the service of visiting newspaper reporters by the Jewish Agency’s Press department. These ranged from daily Press conferences at which the Jewish angle on current events was cleverly given, to visits to settlements and other facets of Jewish activity. Should any event of importance occur, the Jewish version was ready before even the dust had time to settle ; if a leader made a speech or a statement, copies in English, or any other language which might be required, were ready at once and were even sent round to the reporter’s hotel. Meetings could always be arranged at short notice with anyone a correspondent expressed a wish to interview or meet. No trouble was too great, and no one more than the Jewish Press officers realized that speed is unfortunately one of the primary requirements of modern Press reporting. The same facilities were of course given to all important visitors, and it was rarely indeed that a visiting politician, British or American, or a business magnate did not leave the country completely convinced of the validity of all Jewish claims and impressed by Jewish efficiency, bewildered by the opposition of the Palestine Government—and having achieved no contact at all with the Arabs. Judged by any standards, the Arab public relations services could not have been worse. For most of the critical period in Palestine they simply did not exist, and when towards the end of the Mandate an office was created its efforts were ludicrous in their inadequacy ; worse, the Arab officials’ attitude towards the foreign Press was almost always hostile and suspicious. Questions seeking to elucidate the truth of a situation of which, as a matter of course, the Jewish version had been made public hours if not days before, were treated as insults and even when by some stupendous effort the Arabs did decide to

try to put their point of view before the world, it was almost inevitably found that they spoke with a dozen discordant voices. Nothing in journalistic experience was more heart-breakingly infuriating than trying to cover the actual Jewish-Arab war from the Arab side. Every form of stupid obstruction was put in the way of correspondents, even those known for their pro-Arab sympathies; a stupendously fatuous imitation of Britain's wartime Middle East censorship was established and effectively prevented any news leaving the Arab countries until days after stories from correspondents on the other side of the lines had been published. And then Arab leaders complained bitterly that the world Press was on the side of the Jews! It is entirely their own fault if the majority of people who take their news and views from the Press believe that right was always on the Jewish side: all along, in all their relations with the West, the Arabs as a whole have always been their own worst enemies.

The Palestine Government's relations with the Press were not always of the happiest. Their Public Information Office had an excessively difficult task, for, as a corollary to their pro-Jewish sympathies, many of the correspondents were both anti-British and anti-Palestine Government. British military and police authorities, knowing that amongst the dozens of men and women who, legitimately, or on the strength of somewhat doubtful recommendations, had obtained Press cards, were spies from the terrorist groups, and that anyway even some of the reputable newspapermen, particularly the Americans, were in fact in touch with the terrorists, were reluctant to give the Press as a whole the facilities which would have been granted otherwise to reporters of whatever nationality. Discrimination was difficult, for it immediately drew excited protests from the Jewish Agency and more trouble for a sadly harassed administration. Matters improved a little towards the end for by that time some of the wolves were beginning to be careless in the wearing of sheep's clothing, and after the experiences of 1946 and 1947 even some of the more hostile American correspondents were feeling a little sympathy for both the Palestine Government and the Arabs and were prepared to take a more open-minded attitude.

From the summer of 1946 illegal immigration, which prior to that time had been only sporadic, began in earnest, and the fight to get as many Jewish refugees as possible into the country despite the

Government's restrictive quota of 1500 a month, became the focal point of the entire Palestine question. This well-organized traffic served two purposes : it contributed materially to the important task of building up the Jewish population, and it served at the same time as a most magnificent piece of propaganda. On some occasions illegal shiploads were quietly run ashore somewhere along the coast without attracting any notice. More often, however, the operation became an exceedingly well-publicized fight between the Zionists and the British authorities. The entirely revolting conditions in which these luckless human cargoes were transported to Palestine bespoke both the utter ruthlessness of the Zionist leaders and the desperate lengths to which Jewish refugees would go to reach the Promised Land. It is difficult to describe in ordinary polite English the conditions on the refugee ships when they reached Palestine. The boats were usually old and barely seaworthy ; they were crammed from the keel to the scuppers with often as many as one hundred times the ship's ordinary complement, and the refugees were battened down below deck for practically all the long voyage to prevent the ship being spotted for what it was by the watchful eyes of the Royal Navy and R.A.F. Keeping even reasonably clean in these awful conditions would have been a difficult task, but on most of the illegal ships that reached Palestine there had been no attempt at all to clear up anything. Ships that were intercepted were towed or escorted into Haifa Harbour where, in the presence of the Press, a battle royal usually took place when the immigrants were made to come ashore to be conducted to detention camps, from which they were released on the ordinary immigration quota. This infuriated the Jewish authorities, for it meant that legal immigration suffered. Later, as the rate of arrival increased and the Palestine camps were all filled, illegal immigrants were transhipped at Haifa into troopships and taken to Cyprus. This decision led to the most frightful scenes when further ships arrived, but in fact if, as it was sometimes argued by Zionist supporters, the main reason for the illegal traffic was to rescue refugees who were becoming morally and physically broken by their long stay in European camps, it was no greater hardship for them to go to camps in Cyprus than in Palestine. Even when the State of Israel came into being the bulk of immigrants, quite legal ones by that time, were forced to remain in camps because then, as during the time of the

British Mandate, there was just nowhere else for them to go : there was, and still is, a great housing shortage in Palestine.

One result of the steps the British and Palestine Governments were obliged to take to deal with the flood of illegal immigrants was to increase the hatred with which the British generally were regarded by the Jews. Terrorism increased to such an extent that the Government decided that the British community must live inside specially guarded defence zones. To make this possible they decided also that all British women and children and 'non-essential' civilians were to leave Palestine. 'Operation Polly', which was the name some not very perspicacious official bestowed upon this plan, naturally became Operation Folly and it caused huge discontent amongst the already sorely-tried British officials. When, after a near-revolt by some of the more spirited wives, the women and children had departed, British officials and soldiers who were not in barracks, had to move inside one of three great barbed-wire enclosed zones. Military and police guards manned the gates, through which only holders of special passes were permitted to pass. Englishmen were forbidden to walk alone and unescorted from zone to zone, all social life came to an end, and the terrorists and the Jewish Press generally had a lot of fun about it all.

Illegal immigration and terrorism continued, as did vague and entirely inconclusive attempts to find a solution to what seemed an insoluble problem. In May 1947 the United Nations, at Britain's request, decided to send yet another commission to Palestine. It was composed of representatives of 'neutral' Powers and they were instructed to visit Palestine and investigate all questions relevant to the Arab-Jew issue and submit proposals to the September meeting of the General Assembly. The United Nations Special Commission on Palestine followed roughly the same procedure as the earlier Anglo-American Commission, but conditions had very greatly deteriorated. The terrorists, confident already that their efforts were gradually winning the day for the Jews, refused to call a truce during the new Commission's visit, and UNSCOP's work was made both difficult and dangerous during the six weeks in June and July 1947 they spent in Palestine. The Jewish Agency were not, however, so obtuse and great efforts were made to impress the visitors with the justice of the Jewish case. The Arabs, running entirely true to form,

refused to have anything to do with UNSCOP. Certain British officials tried to explain the British point of view which, at that time, appeared to be that the ideal solution would be the setting up of two autonomous states in which, owing to the economic difficulties this partitioning of the country would entail for both the new administrations, Britain would continue to supervise the finances. At the same time, because of the growing threat from Russia, it would be wise if Britain were able to retain her military bases in Palestine. This question of bases was more strongly emphasized by some of the British military leaders, who urged their retention because of the obvious worsening of relations with Egypt. Bases in Palestine, and the continued use and control of Haifa Harbour were, in their opinion, essential for the defence of the Middle East. The soldiers somewhat optimistically believed that Arab-Jewish troubles would slowly be patched up and that peace would return to Palestine, when our bases would need to be only lightly guarded. Large new barracks which were being constructed in the Gaza area (and which in fact were never completed) were shown to UNSCOP delegates as the future camping-ground of British troops from the Canal Zone when they had to withdraw from Egypt.

Some British intelligence officers were apprehensive over what they considered the increase of Communism amongst the Jewish community. The Soviet Union, long an opponent of Zionism, seemed to be viewing the efforts of the Jews to establish a National Home, even a Jewish state, with some benevolence, and amongst the floods of immigrants were large contingents from behind the Iron Curtain—countries from which people did not emigrate without the approval of the Governments. This movement was regarded as an attempt to plant Communist agents not only in the Middle East, but in particular in what the Russians were quick enough to foresee even then would be an important new centre of it. Some slight confirmation of this theory was obtained when some of the Jewish refugees who were interned in Cyprus made immediate contact with the local Communist Party, which helped them in organizing the many escapes which were successfully made from the Cyprus camps ; but probably this association was simply opportunist.

In the absence of any contact between members of UNSCOP and the Palestine Arab leaders, all the delegates were able to take away

with them were impressions gained at second hand, but it was curious to note that Arab obstinacy was regarded as a sign of Arab strength. Most people who visited the Middle East in the months preceding the Palestine war, even quite experienced observers, were under the impression that the Jews would stand little chance in the event of a war with the Arabs. Few people suggested that the poorly led, badly organized Palestine Arabs would put up much of a fight, but the impression was that the regular armies of the Arab States—armies which events were to prove existed mainly in the minds of Arab politicians—would march into the Holy Land and drive the Jews into the sea.

The Committee then retired to the tranquillity of Geneva to draw up their report. This was completed by the end of August and exploded with the force of a bomb in Palestine. There were twelve general recommendations, but the article that mattered was a majority plan for the partitioning of Palestine. It was suggested that the Jews should establish a state embracing the fertile coastal plain, parts of eastern Galilee and of the Negev. The rest of the country, except Jerusalem, was to go to the Arabs. Jerusalem, with a few surrounding villages, was to remain an international enclave administered by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations and would form a link between the two new states. All three areas were to be part of an economic union.

The Jews were jubilant—but hid their jubilation under complaints that they were being hardly done by, that the proposed Jewish state was too small, and that they must have Jerusalem: Zion without Jerusalem was unthinkable. The Arabs, who would have opposed any proposals, naturally refused point blank to accept the UNSCOP recommendations. Publication of the Committee's report was followed by serious communal fighting between Jews and Arabs in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa area. Despite many months of widespread Jewish terrorism and isolated acts of Arab violence, this was the first open clash between the two communities since the disorders of 1936-1939. Relations between the old stone-built Arab port of Jaffa and the mushrooming new concrete and chromium town of Tel Aviv had never been cordial and although they lived cheek by jowl, there had long been a safety valve in the presence of a squalid slum area on the border between the two towns of an ancient community of Arabic-speaking

Yemenite Jews, most of whom were descendants of families who had lived in Palestine for centuries. They were religious Jews, but not Zionists, and had managed to get along quite well with their neighbours on either side. In 1947 the Jewish Agency made a sustained and, in regard to the younger members, a successful effort to convert them to Zionism, and gradually the old buffer was broken down. On the publication of the UNSCOP report, and stories that the historic Arab port of Jaffa was to become part of the Jewish state, disorders broke out between the two communities. Aggressive, organized Jews swept into Jaffa and before British police and troops eventually got the situation under temporary control, large numbers of Arabs had fled from Jaffa to become the spearhead of homeless Arab refugees who were eventually to number almost one million.

The partition proposal, although immediately rejected by the Arabs, did awaken them to the seriousness of the situation. They realized that, with American backing, the proposals had a good chance of approval by the General Assembly, and as it would be followed by the termination of the Mandate and the withdrawal of British troops, they foresaw that the day was not far distant when they would have to rely on their own efforts. The Palestine Committee of the Arab League, realizing that little concerted organized effort could be expected from the leaderless Palestine Arabs, set about organizing a volunteer army which was placed under the command of Fawzi Kuwukji, a German-trained guerilla fighter who had achieved a great reputation during the Arab revolt of 1936 but whose activities this time hardly confirmed his high repute. His nondescript army was composed of Syrians, Lebanese, Iraqis and a certain number of Palestinians: they were badly, and indeed incongruously, armed with out-of-date rifles and pistols, mostly dating back to the first world war (if not earlier). Their great pride and joy, until they had to use them in action, were a couple of old French field guns which fired projectiles of such hoary antiquity that they rarely exploded but merely landed with a dull and dangerous thud several hundred yards short of the target.

While fighting by the Jews against the British authorities grew more frequent and more violent in tension-wracked Palestine, the closing acts of the political tragedy were taking place at Lake Success. In anticipation of the United Nations vote on the UNSCOP

proposals an intensive lobbying campaign was opened, with American and Jewish representatives seeking to obtain the support of all the smaller and less interested powers. The Arab allegation that bribes were widely given is probably as unfounded as are most wild Arab accusations, but there is no doubt that whatever pressure could be exercised was used. The Arab representatives also tried to influence the voting but admitted candidly that they had neither the skill, the influence nor, could it have been used, the cash. An edge was given to Arab bitterness by the treatment their representatives, who had gone to New York to lobby, received from the American Press, whose open sympathies for Zionism and the creation of a Jewish state closed their minds, and their newspapers, to any presentation of a possible Arab case.

Excitement in Palestine was intense as November drew to a close and the Assembly considered the UNSCOP recommendations. It was clear that the voting would be close, and right until the last moment few people in the Holy Land, even amongst the Jews, thought the partition plan would obtain the necessary two-thirds majority. Voting took place on 29th November, and after many heroic struggles with conscience, and other considerations, the plan was approved by thirty-three votes to thirteen, with ten abstentions. Great crowds of Jews had been waiting outside the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and in the streets of Tel Aviv, and when the news of the decision was received in the early hours of 30th November, triumphant processions roamed through the streets for the rest of the night. The Arabs, so confident that the plan would be rejected that few of them had troubled to stay awake for the result, received the news the following morning—and from that moment normal life in Palestine, difficult enough in the preceding months, came to an end. Fighting broke out between the two communities in many parts of the country, particularly in Jerusalem, and for a short time it looked as though Palestine would dissolve into open anarchy. The security forces pulled themselves together and managed to bring the situation under control, but from the beginning of December the fight in Palestine became three-cornered and life was utterly unsafe for everybody.

Apart from the basic recommendation for the partitioning of Palestine, the plan approved by the General Assembly by so slender a margin provided that the British Mandate was to terminate and

British armed forces were to be withdrawn not later than 1st August 1948. The two independent states and the special international régime for Jerusalem were to come into existence two months after the evacuation of British forces. The British Government, however, who disapproved of the partition plan, which they deemed to be unworkable, refused to co-operate in its implementation and announced that they would hand back their Mandate on 15th May. However correct the British assumption might have been, and the plan as originally drawn up left around 500,000 Arabs in the Jewish State, their refusal to co-operate in a United Nations decision was a denial of their responsibilities. Certainly their position was becoming so difficult as to be practically untenable, for with both sides openly preparing for war any attempt to preserve public security was out of the question, and just the ordinary day-by-day efforts to maintain some semblance of government resulted in the loss of so many British lives that public opinion in England fully supported the decision to terminate the Mandate as soon as possible and be rid of one of the most thankless jobs any country has ever taken on. It should not be forgotten that on top of the drain on money and lives which the administration of Palestine was costing Britain, there was an enormous volume of ignorant and uninformed criticism in the United States where Jewish opinion was so strong and so active that even Jewish terrorists were presented as Jewish national heroes, and the brutal murder of an English soldier was likely to cause 'little holidays' to blossom in American Jewish hearts. The deliberate, calculated distortion of Britain's handling of the Palestine problem was responsible for a serious impairment of good Anglo-American relations. In fact Palestine earned Britain only enmity, for the Arab States hold us entirely responsible for the emergence in their midst of the hostile State of Israel and regarded our efforts during the closing months of the Mandate as direct assistance to the Jews in their plans to take over the country.

From December onwards Jews and Arabs, in the intervals between fighting each other and harassing the British, accelerated their preparations for the war that was now inevitable. Their methods were typical of the two widely different mentalities: the Jews were thorough, intelligent, far-seeing and as unscrupulous as they were ruthless, the Arabs slap-dash, over-confident, muddle-headed and

entirely inefficient. Both sides should have foreseen, if not the certainty, at least the possibility of a war, yet while it soon became apparent that Jewish plans had been begun during World War II, if not earlier, no over-all Arab plan ever emerged.

Old-established, isolated Jewish settlements, founded uncomfortably and, it might have appeared, dangerously in the midst of predominantly Arab areas, revealed themselves as fortified strong-points of great tactical value. Hagana became over-night the strong, well-trained and reasonably well-armed backbone of the Israeli Army, with General Staff and other commanders ready to take up their jobs. The technical branches, signals, transport, ordnance, intelligence, etc., had all been formed. In between the approval of the partition plan and the withdrawal of the British forces, a general mobilization scheme was prepared, and by May every able-bodied Jewish man and woman was ready to play his or her part and, what is important, knew what the part was. In addition to all this careful preparation and the national pride and solidarity which ensured that all calls would be whole-heartedly answered, the Israelis had one enormous advantage: the majority of them and almost all their military leaders knew all about modern warfare: they had received their training and their baptism in the terribly hard schools of regular, guerilla, and underground forces fighting the Nazis. A surprisingly large proportion of the commanders were in fact British Jews who had taken part in the Western Desert campaigns.

Against this, what could the Arabs put up? In Palestine itself a hot-blooded, brave, excitable rabble, armed, when they were armed, with rifles which may have served them, or their fathers, well enough during the revolt of 1936-1939, but which were of little use against more modern weapons and particularly the automatics developed during the great war. The Arab volunteer force was in little better shape. But these considerations weighed not a whit with the Arabs who were supremely confident that once the British had gone the regular armies of the Arab States would sweep into Palestine and all would be over—bar the shouting, and the looting. Rarely had any people been more grossly deceived by their own boasts, but the deception was not theirs alone: the world at large shared the Arabs' opinion of their strength and fighting prowess. Only a few scorned observers pointed out that, quite apart from any possible

over-valuation of the actual strength, armament and skill of the Arab armies, not one Arab in a thousand had any experience whatsoever of modern warfare, or of warfare at all.

As winter merged into spring and carpets of wild flowers covered the lovely hills surrounding Jerusalem, life for the British troops in Palestine became increasingly grim. Hardly a day passed without an incident of some kind, not an hour without shooting, either fusillades or single shots fired from any or every direction—with the British always in the middle of the exchanges. They lived, too, an increasingly miserable existence, confined to heavily guarded barracks, obliged to carry arms wherever they went and to go out always in groups to avoid the constant danger of kidnapping. All possibilities of recreation or entertainment disappeared with the stringent new security measures and most of them were on almost continuous duty. The majority of them were very young, quite inexperienced, and their morale sank visibly, not only because of the wretched mode of life they were forced to live, but also because they had to endure the constant attacks and see their comrades killed and wounded without the slightest chance of retaliation. British civilians, mainly government officials and the few senior members of banks and businesses whose presence was considered indispensable, fared little better. They were practically confined to their security zones and most of them had, indeed, to move house so as to be able to live near their offices. The zones may not have been as effective in safeguarding the British community who lived inside them as had been intended, but they did serve to a considerable extent to set up neutral areas in the new city of Jerusalem and to reduce the possibilities of conflict between the Jewish and Arab populations.

PALESTINE : THE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

WHEN the British Government informed the United Nations that, as they could not accept any decision on the future of Palestine which had not been agreed by both Jews and Arabs, they could not take any part in the implementing of the partition plan they were being politically consistent and possibly politically honest. But they can have had no idea what chaos this decision would cause and what difficulties for themselves and their unfortunate representatives it would entail : nor can they have appreciated the ignominy it would earn them, particularly as they were rash enough to add that they would of course be responsible for the maintenance of public security until, with the termination of the Mandate, their responsibility lapsed. In fact it became increasingly difficult to maintain any kind of real security, even in the rapidly dwindling areas in which the Government's forces were confined. Gradually Jews and Arabs, with the helpless, tacit approval of the Government, established their own security measures in the respective areas in which they were in the majority, and it was in the mixed and border districts that fighting continued right until the end of the Mandate, despite desperate efforts by the British authorities to maintain a semblance of order. The Palestine Government quite reasonably refused a tongue in the cheek offer by the Jewish Agency that they should be officially responsible for the maintenance of order in predominantly Jewish areas. This would have given Hagana legal status and would anyhow have been tantamount to acceptance of the partition decision. In effect, however, Hagana did take over in Tel Aviv and other Jewish towns and, after a few more weeks, in the Jewish districts of Jerusalem as well. As the Mandate drew to an end, Jewish aggression increased in step with frantic Jewish efforts to build up their forces and to make certain of a number of strategic positions for the coming fight with the Arabs. Jewish anxiety was great, for they were, too, to some extent deceived by the boastful claims of Arab military strength and by some Arab attacks on their lines of communication. The Arabs on the other

hand, despite a good deal of sporadic and on the whole singularly light-hearted guerilla activity mainly by the bands that were by now infiltrating across the northern and eastern frontiers, took no concerted action ; the official reason was that the Arabs did not wish to be involved in any open conflict with the British.

The situation was, however, serious enough with communal fighting in progress in dozens of different localities, and outrages against the Government forces increasing in violence and frequency, for the United States to have second thoughts concerning the wisdom of the plan they had been instrumental in forcing through. On 19th March their representative reported to the Security Council that ' after consultations among the permanent members and informal communications with the Palestine Commission, the Mandatory Power, the Jewish Agency, and the Arab Higher Committee it had been shown that under present conditions partition could not be implemented by peaceful means '. On the same date the United States submitted to the Security Council a proposal for a temporary trusteeship for Palestine under the Trusteeship Council and for a suspension of efforts by the Palestine Commission to implement partition.

In the tumult then in progress in Palestine this vital piece of news passed almost unnoticed. Matters had clearly gone too far for any theoretical decision to have the slightest effect, and although Jewish leaders were alarmed and indignant, they saw it could safely be disregarded. Even if the United States Government had changed its mind, the American Press and American public opinion was more firmly than ever on their side. And whatever might have been the potential strength of the Arab armies they would have to meet after the British withdrawal, matters were going so well for them inside Palestine that it was clear that by the middle of May they would be in an extremely strong position. If the Arab forces proved to be as powerful as was claimed, well, the time to appeal to the United Nations would be when the Jewish position was seriously threatened. The Jewish leaders had already appreciated that in dealing with international bodies nothing was more effective than a *fait accompli* : this knowledge was to be of enormous value to them in all their dealings with the United Nations. Once they had established their State they would be perfectly ready to ask for arbitration or mediation or anything else : but not now.

Little by little the Jews took over important Arab positions; Jaffa fell to them, Tiberias, Safad, then, right under the noses of the British Army, the all-important port of Haifa. This was one of the most curious incidents in the struggle for power in Palestine. The Arabs gave the Jews their opportunity. For weeks bands of Arab irregulars had been launching futile little attacks against the Jewish districts of Haifa, causing considerable inconvenience to Jews, British, and Arabs, and a small loss of life. More British forces, slowly withdrawing from other parts of Palestine, moved in, but this did not cause the fighting to end. Suddenly, without warning, strong Jewish forces just took over the Arab districts and Haifa was theirs. There was an immediate mass flight of Arabs who added tens of thousands to the already growing number of homeless refugees, but there was no counter-attack and no interference from the British. No Arab will believe that the British Army did not at least acquiesce in this Jewish stroke and the loss of Haifa aroused bitter resentment both amongst the Palestinian Arabs and those of the neighbouring countries. The truth is probably that the Arabs were making an infernal nuisance of themselves and endangering the security of what was to become the main British base in Palestine as the withdrawal gained momentum. The Jews, having taken over the town, informed the British commander that they were ready to allow the British full access to the port and gave an undertaking that there would be no further acts of terrorism in that area. That the British authorities accepted this bargain was, however, one of the most short-sighted actions of the closing days of the Mandate: it may have been sound tactics but it was morally indefensible and the Arabs will never forget or forgive, however much they may have brought the disaster upon their own heads by their stupidity.

Increasingly, from the beginning of 1948 onwards, the situation inside Palestine became so confused, communications of all kinds so disrupted, and the administration's control so sketchy that few people, even journalists then trying to 'cover' the Palestine situation, were fully aware what was really happening. From time to time fighting flared up in different parts of the country, but there was no concerted action. Arab guerillas, becoming slowly better armed and better organized, tried to emulate the exploits of the Stern Gang and the Irgun, but their efforts were, on the whole, amateurish and suffered

from lack of skilled men and proper materials. In February they did bring off one spectacular coup—the blowing up of Ben Yahuda Street, one of the main shopping arteries of Jewish Jerusalem guarded, at the time, by Jewish road-blocks at each end. Enormous damage was done and many people lost their lives in this outrage which, despite Jewish contentions that it was carried out by the Palestine police, was organized and operated by Arabs who had, possibly—this point was never clearly established—the assistance of some of the police deserters who were by then working with the Arabs. The Jews, to a man, insisted that the British were responsible for this horrible and pointless crime. There was a curious psychological reason for this assertion: with lurking fears still at the backs of their minds about the potential Arab strength when the Arab countries entered the fray, they dared not allow themselves to believe that Palestine Arabs could carry out such an exploit in the middle of Jewish territory, at that time constantly patrolled and guarded by Hagana. The Jewish Agency held a court of inquiry and after hearing a mass of quite extraordinary evidence, some of it so absurd that it is difficult to believe it was probably offered in solemn good faith, declared that British ‘police and military deserters’ were alone responsible for the outrage. This incident increased the general hatred, if an increase were possible, with which the Jews regarded the British.

There was also a hardening of the Jewish attitude towards the Arabs, and the spreading of terror became their main and extremely successful weapon. The culminating point in this campaign was the infamous Deir Yassin massacre of 9th April, in which terrorists deliberately and cold-bloodedly slaughtered the entire population, around two hundred and fifty, of a small Arab village near Jerusalem, and threw the bodies, men, women, and children, down the village well. Emissaries of the terrorists, and one or two Jewish journalists who later on revealed openly and proudly that they had all along been working with the terrorists, collected the American correspondents—the British Press being carefully excluded—and took them to a Press conference at which one of the leaders of the exploit explained what had been done. News of the outrage spread rapidly amongst the Arabs and produced a mass exodus.

On 19th April, in another vain attempt to repair some of the damage its earlier decisions had occasioned, the United Nations, through their Security Council, called for a truce in Palestine and appointed a Truce Commission of three career consular officers in Jerusalem—the Belgian, French, and United States representatives. They made desperate efforts to induce the Jewish and Arab leaders to reach some agreement, but matters had gone too far, and on 30th April—a fortnight before the end of the Mandate—they reported that ‘the general situation was deteriorating rapidly, government departments were closing daily, normal activities were coming to a standstill, and the intensity of fighting was increasing’.

This simple official phraseology in no way over-emphasized the terrifying chaos and uncertainty that had by now spread all over Palestine. Refusing to recognize partition, the Government had also refused to hand over the responsibilities or even the actual machinery of government to their successors—the Arab and Jewish Governments which, it had been planned, would then be established each in its respective state. They had also refused to co-operate with the United Nations Palestine Commission which had been appointed to supervise the execution of the Assembly’s recommendations, and indeed the ‘five unhappy men’ never reached Palestine. A fortnight before the collapse of the Mandate their United Nations staff, headed by Dr. Azcarate, reached a Jerusalem which was practically in a state of siege, and were virtually prisoners in a little house which the Government was kind enough to find for them, next door to the Y.M.C.A. which had then been placed under the protective flag of the International Red Cross. Even making allowances for the understandable bitterness which all British officials felt about the entire Palestine question, the manner of their final departure did them no credit. They had received no definite instructions about handing over, and in the absence of any prospective Arab administration handing over could not have been equitably arranged, and so in most cases they just left their offices and their contents—secret documents, typewriters, desks and all—to those members of their staff who were still working. This was particularly true of Jerusalem which, in addition to being the seat of government, was about the only centre in Palestine by the end of the Mandate where the two successor peoples were both represented. Elsewhere government offices and all their contents had already been

taken over by the Jewish authorities, in whose area a new administration had long been formed and was ready to start work.

On the last night of the Mandate the twenty senior British officials who were all that remained of the Palestine Government spent the night in the King David Hotel guarded by a brigade of British troops. Soldiers slept in their tanks until, soon after dawn, the Union Jack was lowered at a moving little ceremony amidst the barbed wire and debris which littered the formerly immaculate government area. The High Commissioner, Lieutenant-General Sir Alan Cunningham, spent his last night in Jerusalem at Government House, one of the pleasantest of official British residences, and there was a similar ceremony there in the early hours of 14th May before, escorted by armoured cars and lorry-borne infantry, he drove through the wreckage of the Holy City to Kalandia airport where planes flew him and the other British officials to Haifa, to remain a British military base until the withdrawal was completed on 30th June. Half an hour after the official party, accompanied by the last of the British police and troops, had driven through the centre of the city, the battle for Jerusalem had begun and newspaper correspondents who had accompanied the High Commissioner to Kalandia had the greatest difficulty in returning to their uncomfortable, dangerous billet near the old Public Information Office. For reasons known only to the British authorities it had been stated that British troops would remain in Jerusalem for some days after the termination of the Mandate and the sudden departure made the situation of those few members of the British Community who were staying behind even more difficult than it would have been. On the same day, while the United Nations Commission was still trying to arrange a truce, the Jewish authorities in Tel Aviv proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. At dawn the next day regular forces of Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq began to move into Palestine and the Palestine war had started.

The course of this short war has, like everything else connected with Palestine, been grossly misrepresented. To the world at large the result of the fighting was the total defeat of the Arab armies, but in fact, while they certainly did not win and, on the whole, covered themselves with no particular glory, they suffered no serious military reverse, except, possibly, in the case of the Egyptians. What the Arab troops did *not* do was to live up to any of the resounding boasts

made on their behalf before the fighting opened by Arab politicians and national leaders, either as to their fighting qualities or the size of their contribution. Of the seven states making up the Arab League only three possessed any armed forces worth serious consideration: Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Of these, the Iraqis, having no common frontier with Israel and possessing, furthermore, only greatly limited transport facilities, did not, except for a small token force, arrive in Palestine in time to take any active part in the first phase of the war, between 15th May and the first truce of 11th June. The bulk of the fighting during this period fell to Jordan's Arab Legion which had so thoroughly invested Jerusalem that the Jewish section of the city was desperately, even dangerously, short of food and water. Helped by the 'people at home' from highest to lowest, as it were, who put on a quite staggeringly silly imitation of a 'great nation at war', the Egyptian Army winding its way up through the southern desert of Arab Palestine, covered itself with ridicule, as its advance through friendly Arab villages was marked by the issue in Cairo of communiques from the front announcing resounding victories.

A fact which the West lost sight of but which is bitterly remembered in the Middle East is that one of the main contributory causes of the lack of Arab success was Britain's action in cutting off supplies of ammunition for the British weapons with which the Egyptian, Iraqi, and Jordanian forces were armed. These countries argue that this was in direct contravention of the treaties by which they are linked to England, and it is one of the reasons why Egypt has abrogated her treaty and Iraq is demanding the revision of hers. By the time the truce was called, and the West practically forced the reluctant Arab countries to agree, the Arab Legion, for example, had not a single 25-lb. shell left. Informed military opinion is that, had the Arab armies been able to obtain ammunition and additional weapons, to which they themselves felt they had the right, despite the Security Council ban on the furnishing of arms and ammunition to any of the belligerents, the situation on 11th June, when the truce came into effect, would have been entirely in their favour. Britain was, of course, not entirely to blame. The extraordinary light-heartedness with which the Arabs embarked upon their campaign, their failure to make even elementary preparations, the dismal breakdown of their supply and ordnance arrangements, their wasteful

expenditure of ammunition, the corruption and inefficiency in most of the capitals—Amman is a notable exception—were on the whole more important factors than Britain's omission to meet her obligations, for, with a little foresight, the necessary arrangements could have been made before the war started and the United Nations intervened.

On 13th May the General Assembly had appointed Count Folke Bernadotte, President of the Swedish Red Cross, as Mediator for Palestine, and he arrived in the Middle East before the end of the month, just as the fighting was reaching its full intensity. He made a tour of the various Arab capitals and Tel Aviv, and made proposals, which were unacceptable to both sides, for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. But on his advice the Security Council called upon the Arabs and Jews to observe a cease-fire whilst further negotiations took place and, the Arabs reluctantly, the Jews willingly, accepted, and fighting ceased on 11th June. Observers from France, Belgium, and the United States, as well as some fifty members of the United Nations Secretariat, were sent to Palestine to supervise the truce. Despite his unceasing efforts, Count Bernadotte was unable to induce either side to agree to any of the proposals he put forward, and on 9th July fighting broke out again.

During the month's interim, the situation inside Palestine had radically changed. The Jews had employed the respite to the fullest extent and had transformed their fighting forces. Hundreds of well-trained volunteers and mercenaries from America and other countries had joined the Jewish Army; weapons, ammunition, and fighting planes had been obtained from various countries, despite the Security Council ban; and threatened areas, such as Jerusalem, had been strengthened and supplied. The Arabs, on the other hand, had frittered away their resources and their time and, even more important, serious differences of opinion had appeared between the three leading partners. Nor, by reason of the continuing ban on the export of arms or ammunition to any of the parties to the dispute, had they been able to obtain fresh supplies from their only real possible supplier, Britain. The impetus, too, which carried the Arab armies into the fight at the end of the Mandate seemed to be lacking. The result was that the advantage the Arabs possessed when they were persuaded by the West to agree to the cease-fire had entirely disappeared when

the cease-fire ended. Fighting continued only for a relatively short time, until 18th July in fact, but in those nine days the Jews obtained the upper hand and, concentrating their attacks in the southern sector, had inflicted serious reverses on the Egyptians. They had also gained a certain amount of ground in the north and east where Lebanese and Syrian forces had made vain little attacks and given their far stronger opponent an excuse for extending its boundaries.

The net result of the few weeks of actual warfare, combined with Jewish terrorist attacks upon Arab centres in Palestine before the war opened, was the creation of an entirely new refugee problem. Already, by 18th July, there were about one million homeless and destitute Arabs grouped wretchedly on the fringes of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and the Lebanon. The United Nations and various relief organisations, such as the International Red Cross, the Quakers, etc., provided sufficient food and clothing to keep these people alive, and some of the Arab countries, notably Jordan and Syria, found homes and employment for a fraction of them, but basically the situation to-day is as critical as it was when the exodus from Palestine started.

After the second cease-fire, which in effect became a truce, Count Bernadotte, who had now made his headquarters in the charming island of Rhodes, continued his efforts to find some reasonable basis for a solution. After a further series of interviews with Arab and Jewish leaders he returned to Rhodes and drew up a report for the next General Assembly. On his way to Paris he paid a short visit to Jerusalem to make staff arrangements, and while driving from Government House to the Y.M.C.A. he was murdered by the Stern Gang. This was another cold-blooded deliberate assassination for a horrifyingly flimsy reason: it was the opinion in Israel that Count Bernadotte's report proposed giving Jerusalem to the Arabs. Like all the hundreds of other outrages committed by Jewish terrorists, it caused not the slightest harm to the Jewish cause. The Israeli Government made ineffectual attempts to trace the murderers, the Swedish Government and the people of Sweden made furious protests, but that was all: this great and good man's death was soon forgotten, and even the report he left behind and which was read to the General Assembly by his brilliant assistant and successor as Mediator, Dr. Ralph Bunche, was practically ignored.

The report suggested :—

1. That the General Assembly and the Arabs should recognize that a Jewish state called Israel now existed and there was no reason to assume it would not continue to exist.

2. Hostilities should be pronounced at an end either by mutual agreement or, failing that, by the United Nations.

3. The United Nations should set up a Palestine conciliation commission.

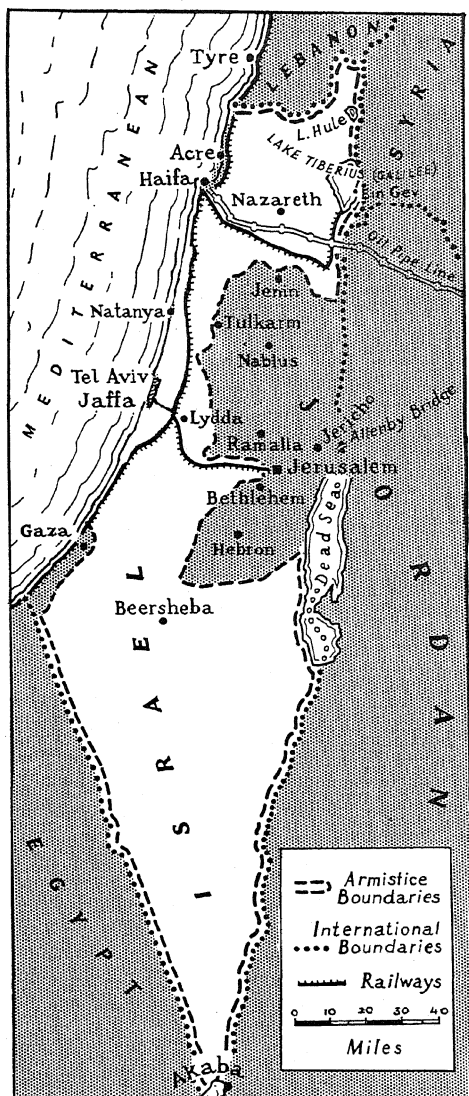
4. The frontiers between the Arab and Jewish territories should, in the absence of an agreement between the Arabs and the Jews, be established by the United Nations and delimited by a U.N. boundaries commission. (The area known as the Negev should be defined as Arab territory. Galilee should be defined as Jewish territory. Haifa, including the oil refineries and terminals, should be declared a free port, with assurances of free access for Arab countries. Lydda should be declared a free airport with assurances of access. Jerusalem should be placed under U.N. control with the maximum feasible local autonomy for its Arab and Jewish communities. Holy places should be safeguarded and there should be free access to them. The right of unimpeded access to Jerusalem by road, rail, or air should be fully respected by all parties.)

5. There were compelling reasons for merging the Arab territory of Palestine with Jordan, subject to frontier rectification in respect of other Arab states.

6. The United Nations should provide special assurances that the boundaries between Arab and Jewish territories should be respected and maintained.

7. The right of the Arab refugees to return to their homes in Jewish-controlled territory at the earliest possible moment should be affirmed by the United Nations.

That was the basis of Count Bernadotte's report, and he urged in the accompanying letter that the United Nations should take the necessary decisions since he felt that a proposal made by it, and firmly approved and strongly backed, would not be forcibly resisted by either side. But the Israeli Government refused to accept the report as a basis for discussion, and eventually nothing was done about it



MAP VII: PALESTINE

except the formation of a Palestine Conciliation Commission—which sat fruitlessly for three years and was then modified and transferred its headquarters to New York.

Fighting broke out again between the Jews and the Egyptians in October, December, and January; and in each case the Egyptians had to give ground, some of the units indeed being driven back almost into Egyptian territory. They were faced by the bulk of the Israeli Army, as the other Arab States took no part in the renewed fighting. This was mainly because King Abdullah, who controlled both the Jordanian and Iraqi forces, felt that unless the Arab States as a whole would agree to participate wholeheartedly and completely, at whatever sacrifice this entailed, in a full-scale war against Israel, any other action was merely playing into Jewish hands. The Lebanon, never particularly interested in the Palestine war, and Syria, whose insignificant bolt had long been shot, were not in a position to make any contribution, and neither Saudi Arabia nor the Yemen had ever actively intervened. There was also the quarrel between King Farouk and King Abdullah, now becoming acute, to separate the Arabs and confuse the Arab cause.

Despite the Israeli-Egyptian clashes, and to some extent because of Egypt's defeat, Dr. Bunche was able to persuade the Egyptian Government to send a delegation to Rhodes for armistice talks with the Israelis, and an agreement was signed on 24th February. This was followed by similar armistices with the Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, and on 11th August, 1949 the Security Council formally declared that the state of truce in Palestine had been superceded by the signature of the various armistice agreements.

PART III

THE AFTERMATH OF THE
PALESTINE WAR

CHAPTER XIII

THE ARMIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

WHEN the fighting in Palestine had come to a somewhat unsatisfactory end, leaving the Middle East neither at peace nor at war, the Arab Governments took stock of their position. In the privacy of their own councils they were obliged to admit to themselves—although no hint of this was ever allowed to emerge in their public statements—that all was far from well. They had lost the war with Israel in that, although they were not defeated, they had most certainly not achieved the victory which their overwhelming numerical superiority should have been sufficient to ensure them. The total combined population of the seven members of the Arab League is in the region of forty-two million: that of Israel is between one million and one and a half million. The three leading Arab military powers, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan, had British-trained and British-equipped armies. Certainly none of these countries had made the slightest sustained effort to build up and maintain a modern military force, despite an enormous amount of spear-shaking and bombastic threats of their intention to drive the Jews into the sea, and not one of the Arab States had received anything like a reasonable return for the quite appreciable sums set aside for the defence services. They had known for at least one year that if they were to fulfil their promises they would have to invade Palestine, and yet, although they had voted sums amounting to between one-fifth and one-third of their national budgets for building up their armed forces, not one had made any apparent preparations for the fight. It is true that soon after the outbreak of hostilities Britain's strict observance of the United Nations ban on the furnishing of weapons of war to any of the belligerents meant an abrupt end of the supplies of arms and

ammunition which, under the terms of existing treaties, they had a right to expect and which, because they were armed with British weapons, were indispensable and irreplaceable. But had any of the three countries possessed a general staff worthy of the name or even a government determined to implement any of the promises they had willingly and gratuitously given to the Palestine Arabs, reserves of some kind would have been built up. The Palestine war revealed not only a complete absence of preparation and determination on the part of the Arabs but also a lack of co-operation combined with mutual hostility and jealousy which would have been bound to lead to defeat whatever the size or strength of the enemy. Militarily speaking, the manner in which the Arab armies conducted their Palestine campaign showed a fecklessness, an inefficiency and a corruption, frightening in the extreme to anybody who must depend on them for their defence.

Nothing daunted by their lamentable display, the Arab countries, to a man, announced grandiose plans for the reorganization and modernization of their armed forces, even before the Palestine truce had slowly matured into an armistice, and there were dark hints of a 'second round'. The Arab League devoted several meetings to the consideration of a Collective Security Pact at which, however, the discussions were of a political rather than a military nature. This new scheme indeed served to keep a fast-disintegrating League together despite the fact that for many months Iraq and Jordan both refused to join in it. As time went on the Arab States, led by Egypt, the largest, strongest, and always the most noisy of them, began to claim the right to assume full responsibility not only for their own defences but that of the region as a whole. Egypt unilaterally abrogated her treaty with Britain which gave the United Kingdom the authority to maintain a base in her territory, ostensibly for the defence of the Suez Canal, but, in fact, as the rear base for Western defences against a Soviet invasion of the Middle East, and tried to persuade Iraq and Jordan to sever their treaty connexions with England. Supported by the United States, France and Turkey, who established a Middle Eastern Command as a subsidiary bastion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, England resisted this Egyptian action, on the grounds that an Allied base in the Middle East was indispensable to Western security. Previously the United States had expended huge sums of

money and a great deal of time and trouble in erecting a protective 'roof' over this area. It is composed of Greece and Turkey and in both countries large and efficient defence forces, working closely and willingly with the West, have been created. A roof has, however, to be propped up and it was intended that the Middle Eastern countries should furnish the props. In view of the obvious weakness and unreliability of the Middle Eastern armies, there was no intention of calling upon them to take any active part in the defence of the area ; all that would be required of them was the ability to maintain internal security and tranquillity and to contribute to the establishment of good morale without which the base as a whole would tend to become a liability.

The recent trend in the Middle East must have led to a reconsideration of Western plans and it is probable that at least some of the Arab countries will be invited to play a more active role. It is thus of interest to consider what these Arab armies do in fact amount to.

EGYPT

The Egyptian Army, were it possible to divorce it from the entirely baneful influence of Egyptian politicians and the Cairo mobs, could, in certain circumstances, be a good little force. At the time of the Palestine war it numbered between twenty-five thousand and thirty thousand badly trained and poorly equipped men. It was entirely lacking in armour ; it had not a single efficient tank and its transport was obsolete British Army material not particularly well serviced or maintained. Its losses were fairly heavy, but more important was the loss of self-respect and the feeling that it had been betrayed by the politicians who sang its praises, made it a laughing-stock by their absurd claims, flung it into battle for which it was not ready, and utterly failed to support it or supply it in any way. Since that time, fairly successful efforts have been made to reorganize and expand it, although owing to various petty disputes with Britain, there has been no regular supply of the modern arms and equipment which it requires. Its present strength is in the region of 75,000 men, of which the bulk are stationed in Sinai, facing a possible attack from the Israeli forces. There is a full infantry division there in which British training, which came to an end when the British Military Mission was withdrawn in 1947, is still evident, and two independent infantry brigades

stationed in the Canal Zone and the Delta. Another infantry brigade, which possesses no transport at all and thus can only be moved slowly and with great difficulty, is also in the Delta, and there are two armoured regiments equipped with an unknown number of tanks and armoured cars. At one time Egypt possessed one hundred Sherman tanks and another hundred Shermans without guns for training purposes, but poor maintenance and inability to obtain spare parts is believed to have reduced the number fit for active service. Egypt planned to buy Centurion tanks—at £50,000 apiece—but the output of British factories was all needed for British rearmament. The target is believed to be an army of 100,000, and this will probably be reached within two years, during which it is planned to spend £E.100,000,000 on the defence services, but the serious deterioration of Anglo-Egyptian relations may well cause this plan to be altered. In the first place, more men will be called up, but means of arming them will be entirely lacking, and with the whole world feverishly rearming, it will be little use Egypt going elsewhere for the weapons she can no longer obtain from Britain.

The Royal Egyptian Air Force is also being extended, and here, as was to be expected, the emphasis was all on jets. Only a few Egyptian pilots have so far been able to fly these high-speed aircraft, and a number of British pilots (in civilian clothes)—although this fact was most carefully concealed from the Egyptian public—were doing the job. But the same difficulty as is experienced with armour and other modern weapons persists here also: there are just not the aircraft available for delivery to a country which is not only hostile to Britain, but which refuses to play its part in Western defences. The Navy, such as it is, has been increased by the purchase of several old British destroyers, some frigates and other miscellaneous craft.

The part the Egyptian Army is to play in the future defence of the Middle East, and these days it is a sheer waste of time to consider the defence of individual nations, must depend entirely upon Egypt's relations with the United Kingdom and, through her, with the West. It would be futile, for example, for Egypt to say, in effect, we will have nothing to do with the detested British, but we will enter a Middle East command on our own. At the time of writing—and it must be emphasized that situations change with bewildering rapidity in the

Middle East ; black becomes white almost overnight—Anglo-Egyptian relations are so bad, and Egyptian politicians are so insistent that they want no part of any Western defence—all they wish for is complete independence and unending neutrality—that it is indeed difficult to see, short of reoccupation, which would probably defeat its own ends, how Egypt can enter into the picture at all. And yet an Egyptian base is vital to Western defences and by her geographical position Egypt, whatever her leaders affirm, is bound to become involved if there should be another world-conflict. That being the case it is clear that, despite her wishes, she must be brought in some way into the preparations for Western defence.

The one glimmer of hope is that, however irresponsible, intransigent and blind Egyptian politicians may be, many Egyptian officers are tending to take a military appreciation of the position ; in recent periods of intense political provocation, when at the dictates of a xenophobic and frightened government the mass of Egyptian people have been indulging in violently anti-British demonstrations, relations between the Egyptian and British armies have not deteriorated so seriously as might have been expected. The Egyptian has long had the reputation of being a good but uninspired fighting man—provided he is well led—and although some observers who have watched the modern Egyptian Army at work have some doubts on this point now, there has been but little opportunity for forming a reliable judgment. While there has been an undoubted improvement in the general standard of Egyptian officers, it seems unlikely that their present training, received now almost entirely inside Egypt and supervised by other Egyptians, is good enough to turn out the right type of officer to lead a fighting army. Certainly their General Staff, from which one officer only is sent to Camberley each year for a short course, would be quite unable to cope with the task of directing serious operations. The remedy is obvious and could easily be taken were it not for political difficulties : integrated training with British forces. This step would indeed be welcomed by far more Egyptian officers than is generally believed, for, whatever their faults, they are developing a little professional pride. If more young Egyptian officers could take courses in England, at Sandhurst for example, as do officers of the Pakistan and Indian armies, co-operation would be ever closer.

Already there is little doubt that the Egyptian Army is capable of taking over the defence of the Suez Canal, but it must be remembered that not only has the Canal entirely lost its value in time of war but that the British base in Egypt's Canal Zone is not there for the purpose of guarding the Canal: it is an indispensable bastion of Western defence.

How does the Egyptian Army fit into that picture? On its own, not at all: it is a complete misfit. In conjunction with a British or Allied army, reasonably well. With one vitally important reservation.

Egypt, despite the widespread anglophobia, models itself in almost all departments of its public life on Britain. This is especially true of the army and everything to do with the army. During the fighting in Palestine, Egypt's censorship and security regulations were slavish imitations of those established by British forces in the Middle East during the 1939-1945 war. Unfortunately, it was imitation without understanding, and the result was complete confusion—'organized chaos' to quote a disgruntled journalist. It is in this all-important department of security that it would be impossible to place any reliance upon Egyptians. Their security machinery is thorough—often far too thorough—without being effective. Many Egyptians, whether from dislike of the British or of the West generally, out of mistaken notions of nationalism, or from just ordinary corruption, simply could not be trusted. During the last war it must not be forgotten that Egyptian Cabinet Ministers with, from their own point of view, quite laudable motives, conveyed Allied military secrets to the Italians, although Italians in Egypt were themselves being interned.

To sum up. The new Egyptian Army is the most powerful force in the Middle East—except the Israeli Army—with the Iraqi Army a close second, but its utility to anybody but its own country depends on a change of heart amongst all Egyptians who matter. There is still a large section of the more educated community which is fundamentally and bitterly anti-British—and the Egyptian Press is venomously so and misrepresents every British action. Yet Egypt's and the Egyptian Army's place in the world at large, and even so small a sector of it as the Middle East, depends upon a realization that there are other countries in the world than Egypt and other, and greater, causes than Egyptian nationalism.

JORDAN

The little kingdom of Jordan plays an entirely disproportionate part in the military potentialities of the area : more, it was, with the sole exception of Iraq, the only country in the Middle East that could be considered, both by reason of its military effectiveness and of its loyalty, an integral part of Britain's Middle East defence scheme. This was due to the Arab Legion which demonstrates most strikingly what can be achieved by the combination of natural, Arab fighting-men and expert British officers. The Arab Legion is now not much more than 8000 well-equipped and fully trained men, but during the Palestine war it reached 12,000. This force, the nucleus of which was the Legionnaires who had had actual battle experience during the 1939-1945 war, when it took a commendable part in the campaign against the Vichy French, not only bore the brunt of the fighting in Palestine, but had it not been for the bitter shortage of ammunition, might have turned the day in favour of the Arabs—at any rate, temporarily and for the duration of the 'first round'. It is not necessary here to dilate upon the excellencies of the well-publicized Legion, but it might well be pointed out that its equipment includes such things as field kitchens—not usually thought about by Middle Eastern armies—and first-class ordnance and supply depots. At the moment the British Government, whose grant-in-aid of over £4,000,000 a year pays for the Legion, is again keeping it very short of ammunition, particularly for its heavier guns. This is deliberate, and was in the first place intended as an insurance that the late King Abdullah—in one of his more hot-headed moments—would not use his Legion for operations against any of his neighbours, especially the Government of Syria, against whom he nursed a bitter grudge.

Since Abdullah's death the policy has been continued because although the new king, Talal, is not anti-British, as newspaper reports at the time of his father's assassination were apt to suggest, he has neither his father's experience nor his personality, and it remains to be seen whether Jordan can maintain its unique position amongst the Arab States. Further, the death of King Abdullah has robbed Glubb Pasha of a loyal friend and supporter, and to-day the British officers in the Legion are not as influential as they were during his reign.

About eighteen months ago the Legion acquired an army-co-operation squadron of light aircraft, most useful for 'spotting' over the barren, practically roadless deserts and high, rugged mountains which constitute at least three-quarters of Jordan and the immediately adjoining territories. These were also a slight sop to the vanity of King Abdullah who, like all Middle Eastern monarchs and rulers, wished to possess 'jet fighters'—which make such a pleasing sight and sound flying over ceremonial parades.

Unlike other Middle Eastern armies, the Legion has also a trained reserve. This is a force of about 4000 men organized almost on territorial army lines. The regular Legionnaires are recruited from the desert areas; the reservists are villagers, for they can more easily be called up at short notice. They receive a 'retainer' of a few pounds a year, but have to do a fortnight's field training for which they receive ordinary Legion pay. Their uniforms and equipment, including small arms, are wisely retained in Legion depots, but are ready for instant issue. There is also a body of irregulars who are the remnants of the volunteers from Jordan and other Arab countries who fought with the Legion during the Palestine campaign. They have been formed into a rough-and-ready frontier force to patrol Jordan's boundaries and leave the Legion free for other duties and proper training. On any standards the Legion is a small force, but on the same standards an extremely good one. This is, of course, basically due to the present chief of staff, Major-General John Bagot Glubb Pasha who, while not being the founder—the former commander, Peake Pasha, was possibly that—is certainly the creator of the Legion as it is to-day.

The Legion's most important and difficult duties now are the maintenance of order and internal security in Arab Palestine, and for many months they included the actual civil administration of that area. It was not an easy task. King Abdullah's absorption of Arab Palestine had far greater support amongst Palestine Arabs than might have been expected, and his half-Palestinian, half-Jordanian Parliament and Council of Ministers for a time worked reasonably well. But there were always numbers of Palestinians, understandably embittered and disgruntled at having lost all they possessed, who felt that in having come to terms with the Israelis, and terms, moreover, which did not restore to Palestinians the land and farms, jobs and houses

they had lost, the late king had let them down. And as, at the same time, enmity towards King Abdullah grew to fever pitch in Egypt, the possibility was freely discussed in Amman of using these Palestinians, accustomed since 1946 to terrorism and violence as a successful means of settling political or other arguments, as a means of removing the one man who was sane enough and strong enough to steer his own course and to say, metaphorically, to hell with Egypt and the Arab League. Indeed, had it not been for the immunity which his direct descent from the Prophet seemed to give Abdullah amongst devout Moslems, his tragic assassination might well have taken place before it did. King Talal is believed not to have inherited his father's ambition to rule a greater Syrian empire, and possibly under him Jordan will reach happier relations with its neighbours. He is certainly far more progressive than his father and will not therefore be likely to impose the irksome restrictions, based upon orthodox Moslem conventions, which so irritated former Palestinians accustomed to the more liberal social régime of British-mandated Palestine.

Financially and economically Jordan is entirely dependent upon the United Kingdom, and must remain so for some years to come. Her return to the sterling area occurred in July 1950, and was accompanied by an agreement between the Jordanian Government and the British Treasury on the amount of sterling to be released from Jordan's small reserve of foreign exchange, sadly depleted by the inroads made by favoured merchants who managed too easily to obtain import permits for luxury and certainly non-essential goods. Owing to the tireless efforts of a British official, loaned to the Jordanian Government, who has secured the confidence of the local bankers, an efficient system of control was established before her return to the sterling area was permitted. But the monetary situation is ever tight in the extreme. Despite excellent plans laid to tide the country over the next five years during which she hopes to complete the integration of her country with Arab Palestine and establish some local industries, there will be need for considerable austerity and even most strict control if a sterling 'gap' of around £8,000,000 is ever to be reduced to workable proportions.

Such a reduction, whilst the Palestine refugees remain unsettled, is frankly impossible, and the West must decide whether, on balance, it is worth maintaining a country whose excellent little defence force,

together with its geographical position, make it of great importance to the defence of the entire region.

IRAQ

Of the Middle Eastern countries proper, including those which are members of the Arab League and omitting those on the outer fringes of what is still a badly defined region, Iraq is strategically by far the most important. Egypt may provide the only adequate facilities for a base, but Iraq is in the front line—just behind and beneath the American-supported ‘roof’ in Turkey and Greece. Egypt may possess the area’s best ports, airfields and communications generally, but Iraq has the petroleum fields and refineries which will be so immediate a target in another world war, and, furthermore, covers the direct and immensely vulnerable route to the equally important petroleum regions of the Persian Gulf. Its powers of defence are therefore a matter of vital concern to the West. Yet against aggression from outside Iraq has virtually no defence. Unless credits and equipment are supplied by an ally or protecting Power, the size and general efficiency of any small country’s armed forces must depend, in the last resort, on the state of its economy and its natural resources. Despite the royalties from petroleum, Iraq is as yet unable to maintain a large and properly equipped army. The country will, in future, however, be able to support far larger and efficiently equipped forces. Iraq is technically tied to Britain by the still-current treaty signed in 1930, as the revised Treaty of Portsmouth, negotiated in 1948, was never ratified, but the British Military Mission was withdrawn in 1948 and Britain had little say in the organization or training of the Iraqi Army and made no contribution to its equipment except so far as this is of standard British Army pattern sold to the Iraqi Government through normal commercial channels, until June 1951. Earlier in the same year the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri Pasha, had agreed that a British training mission should be readmitted and attached to the Iraqi Army, but in view of the rapidly rising xenophobia throughout the Middle East, due to some extent to events in Persia, it was wisely and tacitly agreed that the mission should be given scant publicity.

The War Office appointed Major-General Rawlings to head the mission, a senior general who had already made a considerable

reputation as a trainer when he led a similar mission to the Greek Army. After the new mission had been established in the country for only three months the Iraqi Army showed considerable improvement in both morale and efficiency.

The armed forces of Iraq have been built up solely for purposes of internal security, and although they are large enough and good enough to enable Iraq at least to hold her own against aggression by any of the other Arab countries or against a rising by the turbulent Kurdish minority, they could not withstand an attack by the Soviet Union. They could not even fulfil the important role of 'holding' or even seriously delaying a Russian advance through the northern mountains for sufficient time to allow an airborne army to be flown in from, say, Egypt's Canal Zone to engage the advancing force. The Iraqi Army is a little under 40,000 strong. It is composed of two, and the cadre of a third, divisions. The first division is stationed in the hilly country to the north of Iraq and is essentially equipped and trained for mountain warfare; its main task is to keep watch over the Kurds and prevent any trouble from that quarter. The second division is based in the plains around Baghdad. Both are fitted out with a balanced force of all arms, mainly reasonably modern British small-arms and automatic weapons. The cadre of the third division is split up into small units which are scattered all over the country. There is a little unorganized armour which is considered by the Iraqis to be the *élite* of the whole army.

It is generally believed that the two or three brigades of Iraqi troops sent into Palestine were a complete failure. That is not actually the case, for, owing to political differences within the Arab League, and the abysmal failure of what passed on the Arab side for a Higher Command, the Iraqi troops in fact hardly did any fighting at all. On looks, however, they were the most workmanlike and soldierly of all the Arab units with the exception of the Arab Legion. During the months they were either inside Palestine or in camp in Jordan their morale was at its lowest ebb; this was owing, firstly, to the failure of their generals and politicians to provide them with any fighting and the consequent opportunity for rich Jewish loot, and, secondly, to the fact that, owing to a more than usually acute economic crisis in Baghdad, they were not paid. That has now been rectified, and within the strict limits of Iraq's available resources

the army is being reorganized and, with the lifting of the United Nations arms embargo, re-equipped. In the 1950 budget a sum of £6,250,000 out of a total of £26,000,000, was allocated to the defence forces. That however, does not go very far in providing modern armour—with tanks at £50,000 each. The recent 'Fifty-Fifty' agreement with the Iraq Petroleum Company will, however, alter this if the Government decide to buy arms with a part of their royalties.

For its size, and taking into consideration the limited scale of its armaments, the Iraqi Army is good. The scheme of basic training introduced by the earlier British Military Mission, and now, after a lapse, being continued by General Rawlings and his training staff, is sound and practical. The Iraqi is a good fighting man and although he has but little experience of modern warfare there have been plenty of clashes with the Kurds to give him at least a minor 'battle inoculation', and to ensure that selected units would form a valuable auxiliary to a modern Allied army obliged to go into action in the foothills of the Taurus Mountains.

On the whole, the tide of opinion in the army to-day still flows solely towards participation in the Arab League's collective security pact under the leadership of Egypt, though this might be opposed by some of the country's political leaders. This attitude is probably due to only second-hand knowledge of the Egyptian Army and might well be dissipated by what would undoubtedly prove the constant irritations of co-operation. The Iraqi is extremely independent and Egypt's clumsy attempts to dominate the Arab League and domineer over its members have nowhere been more strongly opposed in the past than in Iraq where, in particular, King Farouk's efforts to prevent an Iraqi-Syrian union aroused widespread resentment—even amongst Iraqis who did not particularly favour union. The Iraqi Army should, when fully trained, be able to make a most useful contribution to any defence scheme sponsored by the Four Powers—the United States, Great Britain, France and Turkey—providing only that political difficulties with Egypt are overcome. It is most improbable that the Iraqi Army could make an effective contribution to a Middle Eastern defence scheme in which Egypt was not participating.

THE LEBANON

Considerable sums of money, mainly American, have been spent in erecting a protective roof over the Middle East. There is no doubt that the central partition, Turkey, is by far the strongest, and the east wing, Persia, so weak that it is a liability rather than a support. But the props which must hold up the roof are rickety in the extreme, ill-assorted and entirely unsuitable for the job. Measures have already been taken by Britain to strengthen Iraq and more are likely to be taken. Can anything be done by the West to bolster up the Lebanon and Syria? The two countries are geographically and economically one unit divided by an artificial frontier. During the period between the two world wars when both countries were governed by a French Mandate, the frontier served French aims and gave a little extra security. Now it is a menace. In a military sense France did little for the Levant State, but independence seems to have done little more. Any advice or help from France will to-day be bitterly resented, and American economic aid has been repulsed by Syria. If Egypt and the other Arab States co-operated in the proposed Four-Power Defence Plan no doubt Syria and the Lebanon would follow, but for the moment such a possibility appears most unlikely.

In considering the Lebanon as a potential cog in the defence mechanism of the Middle East it is important to know that, for all practical purposes, it has no defence services of its own. In the 1951 budget a sum of over L.L.16.5m. (just over twenty per cent. of the total) was allocated to the Ministry of Defence. This maintains an army of some 5500, a small air force and a few small patrol vessels, all equipped with French weapons and, basically, French trained. It is, for its size, a good little force, but suffers from the immense drawback common to all Middle East armies, except the Israeli, of having no experience of modern warfare: except for a minor engagement or so during the Palestine war, the Lebanese Army has never heard a shot fired in anger. Its main purpose, which it carries out effectively enough, is to supplement the gendarmerie in the important task of maintaining internal security and keeping the country safe for the present Lebanese régime. The country has no fortifications and it is out of the question that its armed services could guard any strategic installations, airfields—of which there are several constructed

by the Allies during the war—radio stations or harbours against an invasion or even against a well-organized internal uprising. Some of the tribesmen, particularly those from the Jebel Druze, are brave, and, on old-fashioned lines, they are good guerilla fighters, but they would need long and intensive training before they could adapt themselves to modern methods.

The Lebanese Government is, in effect, the President—Sheikh Bishara el Khoury—with his entourage, who realizes that his main support comes from merchants and bankers who operate the Lebanon's flourishing free market and he is too clever to seek to hamper them by controls, regulations or even heavy taxes. On the whole the President is popular amongst the people who matter in Beirut. The Government did, however, have to meet a determined and properly organised *coup* which, fortunately for them, went off at half-cock. This was the movement led by Antun Saada, almost certainly betrayed to the Prime Minister, Riad es Solh, by Colonel Husni Zaim, whose friend Saada had been. This led directly to the assassination of Riad es Solh in Amman in the autumn of 1951 by Saada's supporters.

Although the Lebanon's vote in Arab League decisions is equal to that of any other member, its contributions to the League's effectiveness are limited and, owing mainly to the non-Arab, or at least non-Moslem, character of just over half its population there is now little general enthusiasm for the League, although this can easily be whipped up for any special cause or event. To make up for this lack of enthusiasm the late Riad es Solh took upon himself the role of mediator, and could always be relied upon to put himself forward in that capacity when differences broke out between other members. In the ordinary line-up of the League's seven members, the Lebanon's stand is unpredictable. Slightly anti-Hashimite—because she fears the emergence on her boundaries of a powerful Moslem country—the Lebanon has no close friend, nor has she a traditional enemy, not even Syria, with whom her relations have been exceedingly strained.

On the whole the Lebanon's relations with the West are good; one certainly finds few examples either in cosmopolitan Beirut or the lovely country districts of the xenophobia which, on a large or small scale, is encountered everywhere else in the Middle East. At the time of 'liberation' from the French there was a wave of Franco-phobe feeling, but once the French were officially out of the country

this died down swiftly and in all spheres French influence is being steadily reaffirmed. There have been frequent rumours that a treaty of friendship has been drawn up with the United States, but it has not yet been signed nor have its terms been made public. Undoubtedly American interests in the Lebanon have increased since the construction of a pipe-line from the Persian Gulf to Sidon on the Mediterranean. There are rumours that the American Air Force wishes to build an air base in the Lebanon similar and complementary to the present base at Dhahran, the eastern end of the pipe-line. Similarly there has been an extension of British interest in this country since the Iraq Petroleum Company moved their headquarters from Haifa to Tripoli.

Altogether the Lebanon is totally unlike any other part of the Middle East. In the constant intrigues of Lebanese politicians and 'rackets' of bankers and brokers, it is difficult to find anything solid upon which to build even a tiny bastion of Middle East defence. It is an entirely materialistic and opportunist country—beautiful, amusing, charming, but, for any serious consideration, a complete waste of time.

SYRIA

The most chronically unstable of all Middle Eastern countries, Syria is also the most intractable. This is even more evident in her internal affairs than in her relations with other countries. For some years it was sufficient that cabinet should follow cabinet with monotonous irregularity under the presidency of Shukri el Kuwatli, but, since early in 1949, presidents and régimes go the same way as governments. One factor, nowadays, remains stable: the real power is in the hands of the military. But it is a military almost as drastically divided against itself as are the politicians and the statesmen.

How strong the Syrian Army can be is extremely difficult to discover. At the time of the Palestine war it is unlikely that it numbered more than 7000 or 8000 badly equipped men. Considerable battalions of irregulars were raised, but, in modern terms, they could hardly be termed 'armed' and their other equipment, such as proper uniforms, transport, and supplies were almost totally lacking. Funds raised to make good these lacks themselves mysteriously disappeared—at the same time as certain well-known politicians became equally

mysteriously wealthy. For a time the would-be dictator Husni Zaim put an end to this chaos and began seriously to build up the army. His stated aim was a force of 45,000 to 50,000, and a number of highly unpopular new taxes began to be levied to produce the necessary money. But Husni Zaim's career was cut short by the bullets of another military gentleman, one Colonel Hinnawi, and not much more was heard of military expansion. The third *coup d'état*, a bloodless one, removed Hinnawi and although it cannot be said to have put any one quite in his place, it was carried out by yet a third colonel, Shishakli, and left the army, now behind the scenes, still the controlling power. Zaim's proposed expansion has been continued though it is seriously behind schedule owing largely to the utter chaos which descended upon the Syrian administration as a result of *coups*, changes of government, changes of régimes, half-executed changes of constitution, inconclusive elections and general bewilderment. The 1950 budget included over L. Syrian 60m. (roughly £9,000,000) for the Ministry of National Defence, and the army has been enlarged to around 10,000. A certain amount of first-class equipment is now being purchased from France both for the army and for an embryo air force—which has 'written off' modern fighter planes at alarming speed. The army does possess one crack mechanized brigade—called the First Armoured Brigade—well trained, well equipped, and generally efficient, but except for a slight incursion into Palestine in the early days of the war, before being withdrawn for the more important task of guarding Damascus, this brigade has no real experience of fighting. It is no coincidence that the leaders of Syria's three *coups d'état* should have commanded this brigade. It was in fact leadership of what is probably the only stable, disciplined force in the country that gave them the idea and the opportunity to carry it out. The rest of the army is entirely individualistic. Units obey their own commanders (sometimes), but take no notice of anyone else, and sometimes the unit is as small as a company and the commander as lowly as a captain. There is no proper general staff or commander-in-chief, mainly because it and he would be too powerful for the comfort of all other leading figures.

All this is both deplorable and a pity, for the Syrian is a cheerful, wholly delightful fellow as a rule, and properly trained and led can make, as the French found, an excellent soldier. There are signs of

improvement and more stability in the army can be expected when Syria finally makes up its mind what kind of a régime, constitution, and leaders it wants, and from being the amazingly disunited collection of cliques it is to-day, emerges again as a nation.

From the viewpoint both of the Syrians themselves and of Middle East defence, it is to be hoped that this process will be expedited. Profiting by the disorganization and the deep discontent of the ordinary Syrian with the kind of government he has suffered for the past few years, a few dangerous, bitterly anti-Western young politicians have achieved position of prominence. They have certainly fellow-traveling leanings and profess to favour an alliance with Russia rather than any tie-up with a Western Power. If, in the general condition of confusion in Syria to-day, one man could be rightly called the most important figure, it would be Akram Haurani, until recently Minister of National Defence. Haurani is a doctrinaire socialist, anti-feudal and anti-foreign, popular with the younger intellectuals and students. He denies any connexion with the Communist Party, but his sympathies are with the extreme Left. He was part-instigator of the third *coup d'état*—of which his intimate friend, Colonel Shishakli, was the figurehead—and he is still, to-day, the most important power behind the scenes, inspiring the pro-Soviet utterances of insignificant Syrian Cabinet Ministers during the meetings of the Arab League. These statements—roughly, that the Arabs should look to Russia not to the West—evoked bitter comment in Turkey whose long frontier marches with Syria. There is a general feeling of disquiet in Turkey at the developments in Syria, for it is obvious that the value of the 'roof' Turkey is providing is brought almost to nothing if its southern neighbour cannot be trusted and Soviet forces are able to outflank the Turkish defences.

What the future holds for Syria is anybody's guess. Shortly after the disappearance of Zaim, a new force came upon the scene. It was the People's Party, led mainly by a group of youngish, pedantic, inexperienced, but sincere and honest men who, despite their inexperience, were a refreshing change from the crafty, slick politicians of the 'Old Gang' who had been misgoverning Syria for too long. But, despite a slight majority in elections held in November 1949, they were unable to form a government of their own and were eventually utterly sabotaged by a combination of the Army, Old

Gang politicians masquerading as Independents, and Haurani. Since then they seem to have lost ground rapidly. There is still the former President, Kuwatli, and former Premier, Jamil Mardam, waiting impatiently in Egypt for a chance to get back. And there is still the movement for union with Iraq, supported by a large number of ordinary Syrians, particularly the tribes, but opposed by the Army, as a possible solution and probable salvation. But what course the country will take, no one can possibly say.

SAUDI ARABIA AND THE YEMEN

These two mediaeval countries of Saudi Arabia and the Yemen are full members of the Arab League, but they are as far removed in outlook, state of modernization, and ordinary twentieth-century facilities from, say, Egypt, as Egypt is from the United States. Neither of them can be said to possess armies in the modern sense of the word. The Yemen, in fact, must be left outside any calculations, not only because it is an almost unknown country implacably hostile to the slightest European penetration, remote, unchanging, and unexplored, but also because it is the fixed policy of its rulers to keep it so.

Saudi Arabia is slightly different, for, although much of the country and much of what goes on inside it is still unknown, the presence of foreigners and their exploitation of its immensely rich petroleum fields has brought it into contact with the Western world. As long ago as 1937 King Ibn Saud, inspired probably by jealousy of his old enemy, King Abdullah, whose British-formed Arab Legion was already attracting attention, decided that he, too, would have a modern army—he had already a considerable force of fierce Beduin fighters of the old-fashioned 'desert warrior' type, adequate for the joint purposes of maintaining internal security and subduing, if necessary, tribal risings or attacks from the Yemen. He issued a decree for the setting up of a ministry of defence with foreign advisers and assistance. The outbreak of war interrupted these plans and it was not until 1947 that a British Military Mission arrived in Jedda. The Mission's brief, in short, was to train a mechanized force of 10,000 on the lines of the now-disbanded Transjordan Frontier Force and the Arab Legion, and far better progress than at first seemed possible has been made. The Mission, under an excellent British brigadier with long experience of the Arab peoples, faced and overcame the usual

difficulties of Arab procrastination, changeability, failure to implement undertakings, provide funds, facilities etc., but the greater difficulty of the impossibility of obtaining equipment took longer to surmount. Now, after four years' hard work, a surprisingly efficient little force has been established, with desert Arabs who had never previously seen a piece of machinery more intricate than a tent peg, revealing the same aptitude as their cousins in Jordan for using armoured cars and automatic weapons. That this force will be able to contribute to Middle East defence to the extent of guarding pipe-lines and petroleum installations would appear to be the largest contribution Saudi Arabia can hope to make, for there are two serious obstacles to any expansion. The first is the difficulty of obtaining proper officers—the Mission is purely advisory and foreigners are not accepted in either administrative or operational capacities in the Saudi Arabian Army; they are not even allowed to travel outside the strictly limited areas open to Europeans. A few Saudi Arabians have been sent to England, to Sandhurst and other training centres, and have done well, but nepotism is rife and King Ibn Saud has an unusual number of descendants, any of whom appear to have first pick of any jobs that are going, including officers in the army, despite their lack of qualifications. It is also difficult to instil reasonable notions of discipline, which is quite an important factor in the standard of an army.

The second obstacle is more important unless recent developments in Egypt have really induced a change of mind. It is an unfortunate and unhappy factor in the situation in Saudi Arabia that Anglo-American economic rivalry, so pronounced in the petroleum business in the Middle East, Arabia, and the Persian Gulf, has managed to influence both political relations and defence considerations. It is highly unlikely that Washington subscribes to the views of the oilmen, but one hears on all sides in the fantastic, artificial American oil town of Dhahran violently anti-British sentiments, including active resentment and jealousy that it is the British and not the Americans who are training the Saudi Arabian Army and providing the equipment. These views, freely passed on to the Saudi Arabians, neither facilitate the work of the Mission nor increase the efficiency of what might otherwise be an excellent little army. King Ibn Saud may well play a crafty game. He will certainly not enter into any open defensive alliance with the West unless the other Arab States do

likewise. But this sick and elderly Arab monarch, while doing nothing which will in any way harm his reputation in the Moslem world, will put no difficulties in the way of the Americans should they wish to extend their air base at Dhahran provided, of course, he received adequate compensation in the form of gold or dollars.

CHAPTER XIV

MIDDLE EAST PETROLEUM

THE Middle East is of outstanding importance to Britain and the Western world to-day for three main reasons: it is still the channel of communications between the British Isles and most of the Commonwealth; it is a vital base area astride a possible Russian route to the West; and it is the world's richest source of petroleum: the last two factors are closely interrelated. Relations between Britain, and, for that matter, the West in general, and this tremendously important area have never been as bad as they are now, and while politicians are seeking rather vainly to negotiate new treaties and smooth out old difficulties, businessmen, and in particular the men who direct the great petroleum companies, must find a way of placing their relationships on a firmer foundation. The age of 'concessions' and all that they implied is clearly coming to an end. Western capital and Western enterprise can no longer exploit for their own good the rich resources of backward Middle Eastern countries. And yet this area, including the Persian Gulf, contains forty-two per cent. of the world's proven petroleum reserves—of the rest, thirty-five per cent. are in the United States, twelve per cent. in Venezuela. The deposits are largely in the least developed countries of the region—Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Persia, and Iraq. Potential reserves are believed to be even greater still, and none, either proven or potential, is yet nearly fully developed. With the example of Persia before them, Western capitalists will hesitate to sink their money in countries where fanaticism, nationalism, or just sheer inefficiency may cause the whole lot to be lost. Yet not only must the West depend upon this rich store of oil, but the oil-possessing countries themselves must be able to reap the benefit of it, otherwise the terribly low standards of living, which give rise to Communism, can never be ameliorated. The answer would probably be patience—but there is little time for patience: the situation, from whichever side one regards it, is desperately urgent.

There is possibly some slight encouragement to be derived from

the fact that relations between the foreign petroleum companies, mainly American, and the rich new oil-bearing countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar, have not yet been tainted with the violent extremism which has led to the expulsion of the British company from Persia and which at one time threatened relations between the Iraq Petroleum Company and the kingdom of Iraq. But the seed of nationalism, germinated in Egypt, the most advanced of the Middle Eastern states, and finding its full fruition most surprisingly in Persia, the most depressed and hopeless of all Moslem countries, spreads fast, and no country can be safe from contamination.

It is possible that in the long run the great petroleum companies will have reason to be grateful to Persia if from the Persian action, wrong-headed, utterly disastrous to the Persians themselves and taken for entirely wrong reasons, they can learn a lesson that will help them reshape their policy towards their own oil landlords.

The following pages contain a brief sketch of the Middle Eastern oil position, the manner in which a British company operates and the activities of an American company. Any full discussion of the manifold aspects of the oil industry, even in the Middle East and Persian Gulf alone, would require a book to itself.

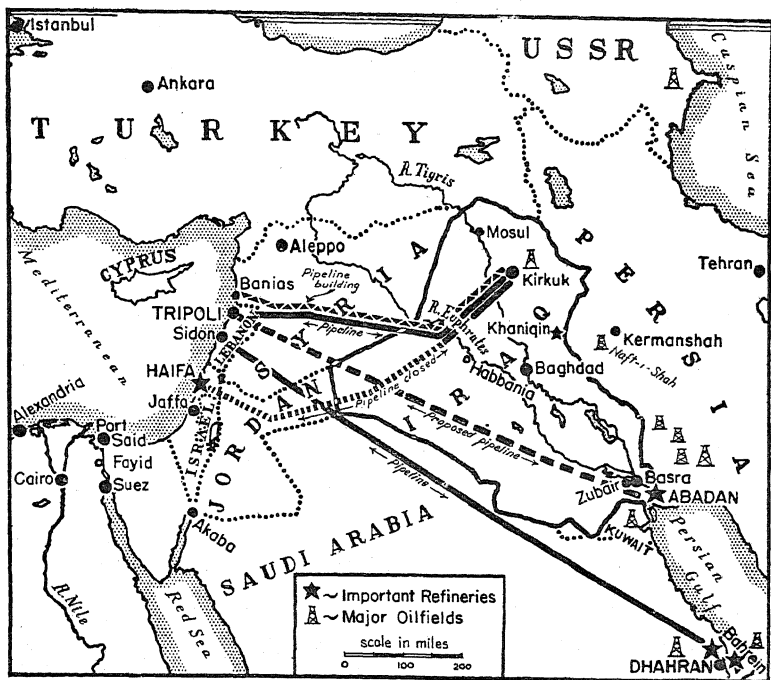
THE GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRY

‘The centre of gravity of world oil production is shifting from the Gulf-Caribbean area to the Middle East and is likely to continue to shift until it is firmly established there.’

This opinion was voiced in 1944 by Dr. Everette de Golyer, who was leader of the United States Petroleum Commission for the Middle East. It was inspired by the discovery of immense new reserves of petroleum in that area between the years 1936 and 1940 as a result of research undertaken in the early thirties. The spectacular increase in the world consumption of petroleum and the sudden realization by American experts that, at the current rate of consumption, United States wells would be exhausted by the end of the century, had sent American geologists seeking new fields—and they found them, and opened up a new era in the Middle East.

American experts knew it was necessary to break fresh ground if the expanding home market was to be made secure. Their own fields were clearly not inexhaustible and they had little faith in the

potentialities of, for example, Mexican production. The British were obviously on to a good thing in Persia and Iraq, and so it was to the Middle East that they directed the major part of their efforts. Although an American company already held a 23.75 per cent. share in the Iraq Petroleum Company, the United States oil industry felt



MAP VIII: MIDDLE EAST OILFIELDS

itself left out of the obviously large developments which seemed probable in this region. Indeed, American economic fears regarding the Middle East had been revealed as early as 1920 when France and Britain signed the San Remo agreement which granted France roughly a quarter share in the Mosul oilfield and paved the way for the pipe-line to Haifa and the then French-controlled port of Tripoli.

The United States had protested most strongly that the agreement was a violation of the 'equal economic rights' guaranteed all the Allies in the territories subjected to the Mandatory régime of the

League of Nations. As a result of these protests America was given her 23.75 per cent. share in the Iraq Petroleum Company. Britain and France also signed treaties with the United States guaranteeing 'equality of economic treatment in the Middle East'. The Americans were, however, entirely dissatisfied with the results they achieved when they attempted to do business of any kind in the Middle East. Professor E. A. Speiser, an American expert on that region, wrote in 1947 in *The United States and the Near East*, of the period between the two wars :

'In practice, however, the Mandatory powers found ways to circumvent these treaties to their own benefit. This was particularly true of the areas in the British sphere, most notably after the conclusion of the inter-Empire trade agreements in Ottawa in 1932. On the eve of the late war Britain stood first by a wide margin in the import and export trade of Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt. . . . Moreover, the two European powers had placed the local currencies on their own respective standards of exchange: Britain pegged the Egyptian pound, the Palestine pound, the Iraqi dinar (which had been preceded by the Indian rupee) to the pound sterling, and France pegged the Syrian pound to the franc. All the Near East countries came under the sterling bloc which gave Britain substantial control not only of the local economy but also of economic ventures from outside.'

It is well worth while quoting the Professor at length because his opinion was fully shared by any ordinary American who took any interest in the matter. Americans working and living in the Middle East were even more suspicious of British actions and intentions in the economic field.

Professor Speiser, after detailing the various oil concessions in the Middle East, continues :

'The strong British position is even more favourable than appears on the surface. . . . British political influence in the peninsula and nearby territories which is backed up by military installations and agreements covering various Arab lands, makes even the wholly American holdings dependant, in ever so many intricate details, on British favours. In the event, for instance,

of serious disorders in Saudi Arabia—a threat which can never be entirely disregarded in view of the no-man's land character of much of that vast, wild, and thinly inhabited country and the insecurity which would be caused by the problem of succession to the ageing and ailing King Ibn Saud—in such an event British protection would be of incalculable value.'

If the Professor is correct in his conclusions, and despite the protection offered by the large American Air Force base at Dhahran, in the event of serious trouble in Saudi Arabia British assistance would clearly be required, it is a little curious that the American petroleum companies have in recent years been so hostile to the British in the Middle East—and so singularly unsympathetic and unhelpful in their recent difficulties. Neither the rivalry nor the hostility seems to be inspired by the highest levels in Washington or London, nor indeed is it often found in the senior ranks of the oil executives, but both are alarmingly evident in the lower ranks of government service and petroleum companies. It spreads also into the subsidiary branches of the oil industry, and amongst the officials in the diplomatic services whose job concerns oil, commerce, or finance.

Americans complain, too, that their quarter share in I.P.C. does not carry with it 'the corresponding right to a voice as to the marketing and distribution, such policies being rigidly controlled by the so-called Red Line Agreement which is wholly Anglocentric'.

The Red Line Agreement was voluntarily signed on 31st July 1928 by all the partners in the Iraq Petroleum Company. The American company—the Near East Development Corporation—willingly agreed to act through jointly owned operating companies in all matters relating to the exploration for, and production of, crude oil within an area roughly corresponding to the former limits of the Ottoman Empire, and more precisely marked on a map of the region by means of a red line. The agreement was to be 'constructed according to, and be governed by English law', and under it the participants were offered at cost price, plus certain small service charges per ton, the crude oil produced, in proportion to their ownership in the company. In 1947, British legal opinion was given that the effect of the German occupation of France was to dissolve the Red Line Agreement. The Americans were delighted as the

component companies of the Near East Development Corporation (Standard Oil Company of New Jersey and Socony-Vacuum) were already partners, in defiance of the Red Line Agreement, in the Arabian-American Oil Company in Saudi Arabia. Although this legal opinion is not sufficient entirely to dissolve the Red Line Agreement, for which the approval of all the shareholders in I.P.C. is necessary, it is now to all intents and purposes a dead letter, and rivalry between the oil companies has increased very considerably since 1947.

This rivalry is obviously the reason for the singularly short-sighted lack of American co-operation in the catastrophe which recently overwhelmed the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company—a catastrophe which, in the long run, can do no one any good, least of all ARAMCO. On the other hand, there has been too great a tendency on the part of British oil men to feel that they were the pioneers in both Iraq and Persia, that they undertook the construction of the first great oil pipe-line and that they alone knew how to handle the local populations. The Americans, according to British opinion, entered the area as concession hunters, years after the British were well established there, and might have been expected to seek advice and assistance from the 'older hands'. On the contrary, the Americans have usually adopted the attitude that there is nothing to do with oil that anyone can tell them and they have resented the air of superiority and vague condescension with which the British have regarded their efforts—so far. There is little doubt that events in Persia need not have happened had there been closer Anglo-American co-operation since the end of hostilities and it is equally true that unless that co-operation is revived the Persian debacle will not be the last rebuff to Western interests in the Middle East and Arabia.

IRAQ AND THE I.P.C.

Leaving aside Persia, which does not enter into the scope of this book, the largest and most important British company in the Middle East is the Iraq Petroleum Company which, although registered as a British company and almost entirely British managed, is jointly owned by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the *Compagnie Française des Pétroles*, the Royal Dutch-Shell, and the Near East Development Company (American) who each hold 23.75 per cent. of the shares.

The remaining 5 per cent. belong to Mr. C. S. Gulbenkian, a millionaire of Armenian extraction, who is now a British subject living in Portugal. Mr. Gulbenkian obtained his position in the company many years ago when he was responsible for negotiating the original concession with the Ottoman Government. There were many vicissitudes before the company, as at present constituted, was formed in 1925 to work a new concession granted as the culmination of protracted international negotiations. Intensive geological research and test drillings began in earnest in 1927.

Iraq was delighted with the new oil concession which, shorn of its technicalities, guaranteed the country a basic royalty of 4s. (gold) per ton, and which seemed to the average literate Iraqi a wonderful way of getting something for practically nothing. A very different view is taken today. The Government co-operated wholeheartedly with the I.P.C. in those early days, when xenophobia and anti-British feeling were rising and where anything new was likely to be suspect. Having found oil in the Kirkuk fields of north-eastern Iraq the company were faced by the formidable task of transporting it to the world markets. Kirkuk is some 560 miles from the Persian Gulf and 585 miles from the Mediterranean, and road transport to the nearest point at which the crude oil could be placed on board tankers would have necessitated not only building a fleet of lorries but also a whole new road system; even then the amount that could be transported would not have been large. A new railway line would have been equally expensive and open to the same objection of too little oil carried too slowly. So the I.P.C. decided to construct the first major pipe-line in the Middle East to run from Kirkuk to the Mediterranean, bifurcating at Haditha in central Iraq, whence one branch would go to Haifa in Palestine (then British Mandated territory) and the other to Tripoli in Syria (under French Mandate). The Haifa branch of this 12-inch pipe-line was completed in 1934, and the Tripoli line completed 4 years later. By 1951 the company had doubled the entire line—laying alongside the old 12-inch line another of 16-inch. The work was hardly completed before construction began on a gigantic 30-inch pipe from Kirkuk to a new terminal at Banias in Syria. This follows the existing lines until it passes through the Homs Gap, a few miles from the Mediterranean. The countries through which the pipe-line runs—Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and

the Lebanon—receive a handsome annual royalty for permitting the pipe-line to pass through their territories. In theory this grant was for the protection they would give the pipe-line against attack, but in practice it is almost impossible to prevent damage being done to a static piece of mechanism crossing hundreds of miles of mainly barren, uninhabited desert.

The I.P.C. built their administrative headquarters in Haifa Bay, where the great refinery of Consolidates Refineries Limited (a joint enterprise of the Shell group and the A.I.O.C.) was also constructed. This was capable of turning out 13,000 tons of refined petrol a day, but since the beginning of the Palestine war and the cutting of the Haifa branch of the pipe-line production had ceased and even efforts to take crude oil to Haifa by tanker have been obstructed by Egypt's refusal to allow such cargoes to pass through the Suez Canal. The Palestine fighting also caused the I.P.C. to move their headquarters, at an estimated cost of one million pounds sterling, to Tripoli in the Lebanon. On top of this the I.P.C. are paying a large staff to maintain and guard their administrative buildings and the pipe-line and those of the pumping stations which have also had to cease work. Hardly was the paint dry on the new houses the company were building for their staff at Tripoli when the Directors decided to move their headquarters to Baghdad as a gesture of appeasement towards the Iraqi Government. The move was in many ways overdue, for it would clearly have been wise for the company to have had their main offices, or at the least a large subsidiary office, in the capital of the country in which their main operations are carried out, from whence the oil comes and from whose rulers the concession was obtained. The trouble was that Haifa and then Tripoli were so much pleasanter places to live than Baghdad !

In the early days of the I.P.C. when Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries were all under some foreign control, their relations with the governments and peoples of the countries in which they held concessions were easy and untroubled. To only a few far-sighted men did it occur that these ideal conditions would not continue indefinitely and that at some stage in their development the Middle Eastern countries would gain the independence for which the foreign Mandate was supposed to be training them, and would run their own affairs. These men—and they were indeed lone voices crying in the

wilderness—advocated—so far as the I.P.C. are concerned, twenty years ago—that steps should be taken to train local staff for more senior jobs. As time went on some of the more perspicacious even had the temerity to suggest that important local personalities should be taken on to the Boards. These suggestions were roughly brushed aside by circles called, collectively, ‘the City of London’, and the men who made the suggestions were severely reprimanded. Nothing, of course, was done—and steadily relations between the oil companies and the populations of the countries in which they work deteriorated.

The usual excuse, when indeed an excuse was proffered, was that it was difficult if not impossible to find Iraqis or Syrians or Palestinians or Persians with not so much the necessary qualifications as the necessary qualities to fill higher posts. Even were this true, and of course so sweeping a statement must contain a large element of exaggeration, it was politically necessary that the attempt should be made, and, as events have proved, a matter of sheer practical politics to make the appointments whether the appointees were worthy or not. It is easy to be wise after the event, but a few more Persians in senior jobs (however inefficiently they performed their duties), and a few Persian Directors, and the Abadan refineries would be working full blast to-day instead of standing cold and silent and, probably, rotting away for lack of basic maintenance. But even with the Persian catastrophe staring them in the face, as it were, there are still senior Directors of the I.P.C. who are opposing the suggestions the men on the spot made years ago, and are reiterating even more forcibly to-day, that unless this out-moded policy is changed, where A.I.O.C. went so surely will I.P.C. go, despite the fact that the I.P.C. have, on the whole, tackled the question of relations with the local officials far more realistically.

It is true, as Blimpish Directors maintain, that were it not for foreign (British) initiative, enterprise, capital, and business capacity, none of the Middle Eastern countries would have any oil industries at all. But it is equally true, as the countries concerned retort, that the oil *is* theirs and that the foreign companies have all reaped an exceedingly handsome profit on their investments, and that they and their officials and technicians have earned very handsome livings in finding, extracting, refining, and marketing the oil. Surely there is room for a

compromise which, in the enormous extent of the petroleum industry, can keep everybody concerned satisfied and happy? The lavish spending of the newer American companies, who, with quite fantastic capital behind them, and a total inexperience of the workings of Middle Eastern minds, feel that the way to any Arab heart is through a polite form of bribery and who thus not only paid far higher royalties than any of the older established companies were paying, but supplemented that generosity by gifts and facilities of all kinds, caused the first stirrings of uncertainty. This was reinforced by a constant stream of extremely clever Russian propaganda designed to foment unrest and to cause the maximum amount of trouble for Western enterprises. The combined result has been a general dissatisfaction with the terms of concessions negotiated in the palmy days of the late twenties, or, in the case of the A.I.O.C., even earlier. This threat has been met by a revision of agreements and now most foreign oil companies pay a far more adequate royalty and provide other *douceurs* in the form of more and better jobs for local employees, educational facilities, and all the necessary basic and advanced training to befit the people of the oil-possessing lands to take a prominent part in the administration of the exploiting companies—using that adjective in its strict technical sense. But the process cannot end there. Gradually the entire petroleum industry must be transformed into a joint enterprise, run in harness by the foreigners and the locals. Oil these days is far too important a commodity to be left to the tender mercies of men with closed minds. It is not longer just a marketable product which can earn high dividends and pay fat salaries: it is an integral part of world and Western economy in peace as well as in war, and at a time when the West is engaged in building up its defences no effort, no sacrifice even, is too great to assure that there is no interruption of the steady flow of oil from the rich petroleum lands of the Middle East to the factories and workshops of the West.

Even before affairs in Persia came to a tragic head, the I.P.C. had been seeking ways of meeting Iraqi grievances and of placing their relations with the Government on a new, more equitable and more up-to-date basis. The situation in Iraq differed in one important detail from that pertaining in Persia. For, in addition to desiring increased royalties and employment in senior jobs of more Iraqis, the

Government of Iraq were dissatisfied with the company's output which they truthfully alleged could be very considerably increased. Output has been restricted since 1948 by the severance of the pipe-line to Haifa, but now that the new 16-inch pipe to Tripoli is operating, production will be largely increased : anyway, since the closing down of the Persian fields it is obvious that every possible effort will be made to speed up production in Iraq and it is likely that new fields at Mosul will be worked as soon as the necessary technical arrangements can be made, whilst production at the rate of two million tons yearly will begin in the Basra field early in 1952. So far as royalties are concerned, the company have submitted new proposals by which Iraq will receive fifty per cent. of the company's profits before the deduction of British tax ; this will give an overall rate of around 39s. 6d. a ton, and will bring in a revenue of between £50,000,000 and £60,000,000 a year from 1953. It is understood that there is a ' tie-up ' between the royalties Iraq will receive and those paid to King Ibn Saud, by ARAMCO : at the moment the American company are paying Saudi Arabia half their profits ; if the proportion is increased, then Iraq will obtain the same share of I.P.C. profits. It is likely that the new agreement will be accepted by the Iraqi Parliament despite the fact that it is influenced, as it was bound to be, by the wave of ultra nationalism that has lately arisen in Egypt.

In other directions the I.P.C. are doing all in their power to improve their relations with the Arabs and Kurds who form so large a proportion of their employees. Gradually, excellent houses, clubs, schools, and other amenities have been provided, and many young Iraqis are being trained, both in Iraq and in England, to fill responsible posts. Except in times of additional stress, as, for example, when fiery Iraqi tempers were excited by the Palestine war and the Western support for the State of Israel, relations between the European staff and the Arab workers have been reasonably good. No such restrictions as exist in Dhahran prevent full contact between, anyway, the Iraqis in relatively senior positions and the British officials of the company, and let alone, away from the influence of political agitators, or of Communist propaganda, the I.P.C. might well be a happy company. There would be a larger influx of Arab workers from the surrounding lands were it not for the difficulties created by local labour laws. Despite their ' Moslem solidarity ' few of the Middle

Eastern countries are willing to admit nationals from any of the others to compete with their own people for profitable employment—even when there is a shortage of labour. Many skilled and semi-skilled men from Egypt, Palestine, and elsewhere, would undoubtedly be pleased to accept the well-paid jobs with I.P.C., but the Iraqi Government have framed their legislation to keep them out. Thousands of Palestine refugees could have been employed in the construction of the I.P.C.'s new pipe-lines, but this meant obtaining labour permits from the various countries through which the line passed and they were just not forthcoming. In the Lebanon the company have even been obliged to dismiss men who had worked for them in Haifa because the Lebanese Government objected to their working in Beirut or Tripoli. Right from the beginning, the I.P.C.'s work in the Middle East has been complicated by the necessity of dealing with four or five governments, as their enterprise, from oil wells to pipe-lines and terminals, covers not only Iraq, but Syria, Jordan, the Lebanon, and Israel as well. On the other hand, some of the senior officials believe that this complexity has been a good thing as it has prevented the company becoming 'the plaything' of any one government: Iraq, the source of the petroleum, has been, and will always be, the most important source of authority—and one must unfortunately say, of difficulty as well.

The I.P.C. are not interested in large-scale refining in the Middle East. In the small refinery at Tripoli, which French engineers constructed out of an amazing collection of old pipes and other scrap when the Vichy French were cut off from the Haifa refinery during the war and could not import petrol, and which has since been enlarged and modernised, the I.P.C. produce sufficient fuel oil for the local requirements of Syria and the Lebanon. But there is no intention of bringing into being another Abadan. Even before the Palestine disturbances and their aftermath of anti-Western bitterness made life difficult for foreign companies, it had been decided that earlier plans for taking advantage of cheap labour and low operating costs to build refineries as near as possible to the wells, would have to be abandoned. Not even the undoubted benefit of shipping refined spirit instead of crude oil with all its waste matter could compensate for the political uncertainties of life in the Middle East. Once a great refinery has been built, contrary to much that has been written in the

Arabic newspapers in connexion with the Haifa refinery, it is not a practical proposition to dismantle it and shift it somewhere else.

At the end of 1949 there were twelve refineries in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region with a total daily capacity of 180,000 tons, and the A.I.O.C. refinery at Abadan accounted for nearly 100,000 tons of processing capacity.

Since 1948 a new refinery has been established in Kuwait, with a capacity of over 7000 tons daily. The Egyptians plan to expand the refinery at Suez and a new refinery is to be constructed in Iraq which will satisfy the internal needs of that country. But to quote the U.N. Economic and Social Survey: 'In 1949 the Middle East refineries were capable of processing about 300 million barrels of the 530 million barrels of crude production'. The remainder was exported, in crude form, mainly to Europe and North America, where it was refined.

In the years immediately following the end of the great war the I.P.C., who hold concessions in most of the Middle Eastern countries, spent millions of pounds drilling for oil in Palestine, Syria, and elsewhere, but nothing workable was found. Drilling was actually in progress in Gaza in southern Palestine when fighting broke out between the Jews and Arabs and the State of Israel was founded. Equipment worth one million pounds had to be left behind and the Israeli Government have refused to allow the company to recover it, and it is now believed to be scattered about in various parts of the new State, doing work for which it was never intended. Further losses are being incurred because of Iraq's refusal to allow the oil to flow to Haifa, but despite protracted negotiations and a certain amount of pressure, there is little likelihood that the ban will be lifted; that it is harming Israel's economy is considered far more important than the additional revenue which would accrue to Iraq, or the damage being done to Western rearmament and economy in general.

PETROLEUM : ARAMCO AND SAUDI ARABIA

America's gigantic Middle Eastern oil enterprise, the American-Arabian Oil Company at Dhahran in Saudi Arabia, is worth careful study, for in it the Americans would appear at the moment to have evolved a particularly successful method of operating an intricate Western organization in a primitive Eastern country. They are

fortunate, however, in having to deal with a completely autocratic ruler rather than with any of the usual Eastern versions of parliamentary government. This, on a short-term view, has immense advantages: they have, if one may put it so crudely, 'bought' King Ibn Saud, and that is all that matters. On a longer view they may face most serious trouble when the King dies—and there is a battle royal for the succession to an exceedingly rich heritage. On how ARAMCO develops between now and that time, which cannot unfortunately be very long delayed, depends the future of their enterprise, and it is not out of the question that they might learn valuable lessons from *recent* British experiences.

When the Americans decided to create a large petroleum industry in Arabia they started with certain important advantages, derived from the possession of a large and flourishing home petroleum industry. From this they could draw highly skilled personnel, both in the technical and administrative fields. These men, who formed the nucleus of the new organisation, knew all there was to be known about the job of building up a new oilfield and refinery. The primary requisites in attracting staff were high wages and living conditions at least as good as would be found in a similar enterprise in the United States; and the immense scale of the new company enabled those conditions to be met.

The first impression received by any visitor to Dhahran now is that he has arrived in an American city. After crossing the eleven hundred miles of barren desert which separate Dhahran from Beirut, the aeroplane puts down on an American airport on the edge of an enormous compound in which lives the largest purely American community outside the United States—and the company's employees live almost exactly the same life they would live at home. Everything that lavish expenditure and modern engineering can do to make life not only tolerable but entertaining in a frightful climate and with no natural facilities, has been done. Air-conditioned bungalows to accommodate either families or two, three or four unmarried men, equipped with excellent kitchens, bathrooms, frigidaires, radios, and American labour-saving devices, are supplied as living quarters. They are all handsomely furnished and provided with a small plot of land in which, should they feel inclined, the residents can struggle against the desert and the climate to create a garden. There is a

United States Post Office where Saudi Arabian stamps are sold for American money and there are stores where all the familiar American goods, from groceries to automobiles, can be purchased at reasonable prices. There are barber shops and beauty parlours, drug stores, cafés, restaurants. Beyond the shopping centre is a large baseball ground, a most attractive swimming pool and tennis courts which are flood-lit so that they can be used in the cool of the evening. The cinemas show the latest films, released in Dhahran at much the same time that they are being projected in the large American cities, at a nominal entrance charge.

The clubs are many and varied, and it is possible to choose, according to one's mood, between outdoor dining and dancing and indoor night-clubs. For oilmen who wish to gamble—and there are many of them—there is a special club where bridge, poker, and canasta are played. ARAMCO in common with all other oil companies have a serious problem in their poker-playing employees. Many a driller has spent months in the wilderness earning thousands of dollars only to lose the lot on the first night of 'local leave' in Dhahran or any other large centre; worse, many men not only lost all their accumulated pay, but went on playing until they were heavily in debt. Gambling and drunkenness are the two great problems with which personnel managers of all the large oil companies in the Middle East—British as well as American—have to contend. The Americans have tackled the problem realistically by providing a gambling club where play is carefully watched by a senior member of the staff, and men who lose too much are quietly warned and, if they disregard the warning, immediately dismissed and sent home.

The same approach is made to excessive drinking. Alcoholic drinks are available at low prices and in considerable quantities for home consumption. In addition the company's employees can drink in any bar or club they fancy. But, after a warning; any one drinking to excess is flown back to the United States. Children attend an excellent American school up to the age of fourteen, and after that they either go back to the States to complete their education or, if their parents wish, they can go on to one of the American or French schools in Beirut and are granted two free return passages a year in the supply 'planes which fly fresh vegetables from the Lebanon daily.

Nearly all the great oil companies in the region—the I.P.C. and the A.I.O.C., for example—provide, or provided, similar facilities for their staff, if not, possibly, on so lavish a scale, but the great difference is that in the older companies these amenities were gradually built up over a number of years and are even now not complete : ARAMCO provided them right from the beginning, the building of proper accommodation, clubs, etc., taking equal priority with that of the installations and offices. Another great difference, and one that makes it possible for ARAMCO to attract and keep all the first-class American staff they require, is their policy of encouraging American women to live in Dhahran ; not only wives and families, but also girls who are employed in the offices, clubs, hospitals, etc. The absence of European women and the lack of accommodation for families has proved one of the important factors in the constant drain on staff experienced by the older British companies.

If experience and foresight have enabled ARAMCO to avoid any but insignificant difficulties in relation to their large American staff, they have not been able to prevent a good deal of trouble with their locally engaged labour. This has by no means been their own fault, and sprang basically from the extreme backwardness of the Saudi Arabians who were of necessity first choice. They were not only almost entirely illiterate, but ignorant to a quite surprising degree of the use of even such primitive labour-saving implements as, for example, wheelbarrows and brooms. In their early days with ARAMCO Saudi Arabians would fill a wheelbarrow with rubbish and then pick it up and carry it away : the long handle of a broom would be cut down to enable the sweeper to perform his labours from a crouching attitude. To try to instruct such men in the handling of even the simpler portions of the vast, intricate and complicated machinery of an oil refinery was a stupendous task, and that a certain degree of success has been attained testifies to the long-suffering patience of American foremen.

Another great difficulty, and one which has been only partially overcome, is the ingrained habit of the desert Beduin of working in a fixed job only long enough to amass a little cash, whereupon he would buy himself a new camel or a new wife, and disappear into the blue. Soon after an Arab had, with infinite patience, been taught to use some simple tool he would depart, without notice, and the

task had to start all over again. ARAMCO have introduced all kinds of inducements to retain the services of the Saudi Arabs they have trained. Badges are given for every year of service, wages are greatly increased after a certain period, living and working conditions continue to be improved, but the problem is by no means solved. The local employees are all housed at Dhahran and other large centres in conditions which must appear quite fantastic to a man who had never previously known anything more substantial than a tent. In addition to good solid terraced blocks with rooms, shared by two men complete with beds, showers, and toilet facilities, ARAMCO have built mosques, canteens which serve well cooked native food, schools, hospitals, clubs, and sports grounds. No women are, however, allowed in these quarters—called, collectively, ‘the Saudi camp’. As a result, hundreds of Arab women live in squalid, extremely unhygienic conditions just beyond the limits of the camp, providing a breeding ground for the diseases American doctors are striving so hard to eliminate only a few miles away. Efforts to remove these women have so far been entirely unsuccessful as they are, after all, only camping in the desert which is truly their home.

The labour problem has also its political aspect and this in the long run is likely to prove more serious. In the early days of their work in Dhahran, because of the obvious limitations of the Saudi Arabs, ARAMCO obtained permission from King Ibn Saud to bring in non-Americans to fill important jobs which would not be held by Americans, such as foremen, clerks, accountants, semi-skilled engineers, doctors, dentists for work amongst the local labour force (which has now reached the figure of over 15,000 and is still growing). Hundreds were engaged from India, Pakistan, Egypt, Bahrein, and other countries. Many had previous experience of work in oilfields and refineries, most spoke both Arabic and a certain amount of English, and on the whole they were extremely successful and contributed a great deal to the smooth running of the enormous enterprise. The Americans were perfectly ready to admit that these ‘foreigners’ were far more efficient in dealing with the Saudis than they were themselves. But, despite high pay, many of them, particularly the Egyptians, have left because, whatever their qualifications (and many were educated and possessed university degrees), the Americans insisted upon classifying them as ‘local labour’ and treating them as

inferior beings. The bulk of the Egyptians—a race that does not, in any circumstances, like working abroad—left before the completion of their first contract and on their return to their own country were responsible for an intensive campaign in the Egyptian Press describing in lurid terms the conditions under which they were forced to live and work in Saudi Arabia. Their main complaints were that they were not allowed to take their wives, were not allowed inside the American compound, could not go to the cinemas, or swim in the Dhahran pools, or go to bars or cafés other than the ‘second-class’ canteens provided for the Saudis. Alcohol was forbidden them. In short, they were forced to live on equal terms with the Saudi Arabians whom they despised as ‘unwashed nomads’. The arrival of even better trained and qualified Palestine refugees, eager, in their dreadful circumstances, to take any kind of a job anywhere, compensated for the exodus of the others, but the basic problem remains.

Owing to the peculiar structure of Saudi Arabian life, ARAMCO has so far been able to avoid even a hint of the difficulties which have faced and continue to face other Middle Eastern oil companies. It would, however, be the extreme of folly if they imagined such difficulties would never arise. Indeed the success, of which they themselves boast, with which they are building up ‘a new Saudi Arabian middle class’ seems to indicate that difficulties will arise sooner than, in the slow normal course of political development in this remote backward country, they might have been expected. To over-simplify a situation which is in no way simple, the Americans have all their dealings with King Ibn Saud, complete undisputed autocratic ruler in his country, or with his immediate representatives, usually members of his family. They have been extremely lavish in their dealings with the King, whose every wish they have gratified and into whose excessively capacious pockets they have poured dollars and sovereigns and anything those currencies can buy—and however exigent became the demands, they were inevitably met. Conversely, every care has been taken to observe all the restrictions and bans dictated by the King’s reactionary Moslem principles—and that is the reason for some of the difficulties with foreign labour. In this manner the Americans believe that they are ‘keeping the King sweet’—as they undoubtedly are, at a price.

But by the wealth they are showering upon the old King, ARAMCO are making the heritage he will leave so much more valuable than it would have been, that the ordinary dispute which the right of succession would anyway have entailed, will now become a battle royal. The Crown Prince, the Emir Saud, is the rightful heir, but there are other contenders and all are already making preparations to fight for the Crown. Enormous sums of money disappear mysteriously in Saudi Arabia, a country which, despite its huge oil royalties, is sometimes on the verge of bankruptcy. It has been fairly well established that the money, which is usually paid over in the form of gold sovereigns, goes in the following manner: one third is spent on luxury purchases by members of the large royal family; another third (paid in dollars) remains in banks in America and other countries for the same people; and the remaining third is literally buried in the sands of Arabia—to await the day it will be required to bribe hostile tribes or pay mercenaries. The succession having been settled, and there is no figure amongst the claimants with one half King Ibn Saud's personal authority or character, ARAMCO will have to contend with the probability that some kind of a government not composed entirely, as at present, of either sons or other men entirely subservient to the ruler, will emerge—and this will be the beginning of parliamentary government in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis who are now receiving their education thanks to ARAMCO and the wealth it has brought to the country, will begin to demand a say in the country's affairs—and nationalism will have been born.

There is another faint cloud on the distant horizon: Communism is gaining ground in the Saudi camps, both amongst the Saudi Arabians and the other foreign employees. It is believed that the impetus comes from the Palestinians (many of whom are Christians) who are resentful of their living conditions, and who had previously taken a passing, and an understandable, interest in Communism in the refugee camps in which they were herded after their expulsion from their own country. But the Soviet Union, either through the day-long radio broadcasts which are listened to assiduously by the Saudis, or through other forms of propaganda, are actively trying to spread dissatisfaction amongst the workers in this great American enterprise. It is, of course, a truism that the better a man's living conditions—up to a certain standard of education—the more he will want, and

Communist propaganda draws a telling parallel between the living conditions of the Americans and the others.

It is unlikely that any of these points have escaped the notice of the shrewd American businessmen who direct the company's activities, but if they have a fault it is in their trust in the power of money. If they wish to avoid the kind of troubles which led to the downfall of A.I.O.C. and may yet make life intensely difficult for the I.P.C. and other companies, they will take steps to associate Saudi Arabians with the management of the company before it is too late—but as yet natives are not allowed inside the American compound unless they are royal guests or servants.

COMMUNISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

WHILE Western control lasted in the Middle East—British in Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine, French in Syria and the Lebanon—one of the most important tasks of the public security authorities was to keep down Communism and keep out known Communists. The foreign officials knew only too well that there was no better breeding-ground for Communism anywhere in the world, and that once it obtained a foothold it would spread with enormous rapidity.

Foreign control has disappeared and social conditions have deteriorated to a point where Communism has no need to be imported ; it is spontaneously generated from the general misery and despair which is daily being increased by the greed, stupidity and folly of Middle Eastern leaders, most especially in Egypt, the most dangerous and deplorable country of them all. (I except Persia, as it is not truly in the Middle East. Conditions there, however, are slightly worse than in Egypt and the situation even more dangerous if only because of its proximity to Russia with whom it has a long land frontier.)

Sooner or later Communism must engulf Egypt and after it most of the Middle East, for there is clearly no hope of any change of heart or of outlook on the part of the ruling classes. The only question is, how long will the revolution be postponed ? The answer may well be—for a long time. There are two obstacles : in the first place, Communism has as yet produced no real leaders in the Middle East, and history has yet to record a revolution without a leader. In the second, while foreign control has disappeared, the geographical and strategic position of the Middle East is so important to the West that every effort, including, I venture to suggest, actual interference in the region's internal affairs, must continue to be made to maintain the rickety, rotten structure of the present régimes. Interference to the point when reforms could be imposed upon the present rulers and governments is in these days out of the question—unfortunately for the masses.

The great danger is that the abysmal folly of the present Egyptian leaders may lead to so complete a weakening of their control over their turbulent, unruly mobs, that the country will just collapse into anarchy. And then, leaders or not, Communism will emerge at the top. The same thing is likely to happen, and even more rapidly, in Persia, a country which has now no visible means of support.

THE GROWTH OF COMMUNISM IN THE ARAB STATES

After the end of the Palestine war the Soviet Union greatly intensified its activities throughout the Middle East. The deep discontent and bitterness which then prevailed throughout the area provided Moscow with a situation which was practically hand-made for the dissemination of Communist propaganda, whether on social or on political grounds. The Soviet Union's basic objectives in the Middle East are the establishment of governments which are, or will become, entirely subservient to Moscow, and the withdrawal of all British or American forces from the region. (Mr. Gromyko, during the lengthy and dreary meetings of the Foreign Ministers Deputies in Paris during the spring of 1951, made no secret of his Government's active fears of British and American bases in the Middle East. On many occasions he stressed that these bases, in conjunction with other Atlantic bases in North Africa and Europe, 'encircled' the Soviet Union.) If Moscow achieved its objectives there would, of course, be no further need for the Soviet Union to fear that any defensive coalition of the Arab States and the Anglo-Saxon Powers would prevent her getting a grip on the great petroleum deposits of the Persian Gulf, or would be able effectively to block her attempts to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Kremlin has, until recently, used much the same tactics in the Middle East as in other parts of the world: there has been incitement to anti-foreign or anti-Right-wing demonstrations and riots; internal political troubles are accentuated and the position of minorities exploited. But the outstanding feature of Soviet strategy has been the effective use of political organizations of the Right to accomplish its aims. Nationalist and Right-wing organizations have accomplished much of the disruptive work the Communists would normally expect to do themselves.

In 1940 there were but few real Communists in the Middle East and they were to be found amongst the university students of Cairo and Beirut and within one or two Jewish districts in Palestine. There were, in addition, a small number of opportunist political agitators who had been taken to Moscow, indoctrinated with Communist ideology and practices, and sent back in secret to the Middle East. Finally, there were a few eccentric politicians who were not taken seriously by any one but the Soviet Union, but who could always be counted upon to further, consciously or unconsciously, Soviet objectives. Because of the magnificent fighting qualities of the Red Army, aided by tremendous publicity over all the Allied-controlled radio stations in the Middle East, the Arab States, in company with a large part of the civilized world, had changed their attitude towards Russia. Egypt and the Soviet Union established diplomatic representation entirely owing to the fact that Russia was one of the Allies, and so did the Lebanon, although this was after Russia had given the Lebanese considerable semi-secret encouragement in their efforts to get rid of the French.

Left-wing intelligentsia everywhere were seriously bewildered by British policy towards Communism, especially during the latter part of the war. Many of the major disputes between the Left and Right resistance factions of Greece and Yugoslavia were fought out in the Middle East with the result that those newspaper readers who bothered to think wanted to know why the British Government supported the Communists in Yugoslavia and the King in Greece. Arab governments were rarely alarmed by the possible growth of internal Communism in Moslem countries, but they were most apprehensive of the Soviet Union gaining influence in Greece or Cyprus. It is not without significance that the Soviet Union first established diplomatic relations with Iraq during the short-lived government of the extreme Right-wing nationalist, Rashid Ali al Kilaini, after he had organized a rebellion against the British forces in Iraq. It was the establishment of the Middle East diplomatic posts that gave the Soviet Union the opportunity they so desired to penetrate organizations of the Left, the trade unions (which were then striving to become established in almost every small industrial centre in the region), and the various workers committees which had already been formed by fellow travellers or students, for the purposes of 'national liberation', in

Palestine, Egypt, and Iraq. But infiltration into the powerful Right-wing movements, such as the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt and the Istiqlal or Watanist (Independence or Nationalist) organizations elsewhere, was the most important of all Communist activities.

Seeking also to sow their propaganda in a field of enormous potential fertility, the Soviet Union sent good Moslems to fill diplomatic posts in Egypt and Iraq, men who worshipped at the Mosque each Friday and lived in the 'native' parts of the city not normally frequented by their colleagues. They and their guests sat around in the cafés, which are the heavily attended political clubs of the Middle East, and pointed out to eager listeners that there were over twenty million Moslems living in the Soviet Union where there was absolute religious freedom. Russia even managed to send a few Soviet Moslems on the annual Pilgrimage to Mecca, where they sought not only to influence the other members of the particular party they joined, but on their long journey from Russia to Saudi Arabia and back they spent several months in Syria and Egypt where their subtle propaganda was all the more effective for the sanctity which their having made the Pilgrimage lent them. It was men of this kind who were largely successful in breaking down the belief, cultivated so assiduously by anti-Communist Moslem leaders, that Communism was utterly incompatible with Islam. On the contrary, asserted these pilgrims, 'the Prophet Mohammed was the first Communist', and the Soviet-controlled radio plugged this theme—in between quite excellent programmes of Arab music and songs which attracted a far larger audience than any of the other foreign broadcasts. In addition to the benefits which Communism would bring to the Islamic nations, these radio broadcasts also managed to put over a great deal of telling anti-Western propaganda, exceedingly cleverly done and specially edited for each region, so that the West was continually finding itself put in the wrong on the very subject and the exact area of the Middle East where, at the moment, it was trying particularly hard to make friends and influence people.

But although this type of propaganda undoubtedly makes thousands of converts—some of whom, in actual fact, will not be fully aware that they are converts until the appropriate time for the great Middle East revolution arrives—the rich Pashas and the members of the tiny minority of wealthy men, including, of course, the members of all the

Arab governments, manage to retain the wishful belief that Moslems are immune from Communist infection. None of them seems to realize that the Communist creed had been carefully doctored and an amended version suitable for Islamic peoples produced before it is preached in Arab countries.

In addition, of course, the Communist-inspired radio and Press never fails to use its most telling card : the quite dreadful exploitation of the Arab peoples, their misery and poverty. Greedy, grasping landlords and industrialists are held up daily as the class responsible for the grim, hard lives of the masses, but the Communist leaders are clever enough rarely to pillory the Arab 'enemies of the people' on their own ; behind them, and to a great extent responsible for their nefarious activities, are always 'the imperialist oppressors'.

Soviet propaganda is also effective amongst the effendi class (this means, usually, the young Arab who wears European clothes) of the towns. These young men, who have to a great extent turned their backs upon the religion which sustained their fathers and at least gave them an anchor in life, have so far found nothing to take its place. They have contemptuously cast aside the traditions and culture of the East, but have acquired only the thinnest veneer of Western culture and none of its traditions. The average effendi, specially those from Egypt, imitates the West, but nourishes an intense, jealous hatred of the people whose outer habits he slavishly copies. Their education is entirely without depth and fits them only for the end-all and be-all of Middle Eastern life—a government job. But with the spread of education, unemployment amongst the would-be government servants, and even those with a little more character and ability who go into the professions—the law or medicine—has tended to become acute, and this class provides one of the most fertile recruiting grounds for Communists. Dissatisfied with their own people, hating and ill at ease with the West, with no future before them and no background to sustain them, it is little wonder that they are prepared 'to give Communism a chance'.

From time to time various Arab leaders, usually in Egypt, Iraq, or Syria, openly advocate that the Arabs should finish with the West and align themselves with the Soviet Union ; there was a widespread move in this direction in Egypt when Britain refused to accept the unilateral abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. Generally, no

one would be more alarmed than the leader making such a proposal were it to be taken seriously, for whatever appeal Communism may have to the masses, it is anathema to the ruling classes. Usually, however, this kind of move is just a small piece of Arab blackmail and need not be taken seriously. On the other hand, there are intelligent and responsible Arab leaders who do sincerely feel that the Middle East has no quarrel with the Soviet, and indeed are inclined to believe that the West uses 'the Russian bogey' as an excuse for retaining its hold on the Arab countries. The emergence of the State of Israel has, however, increased the fear of Communism in the Middle East, for many Arabs believe that the Communist element in the new State is not only strong, but definitely encouraged by Moscow. Some Egyptian Army officers, for example, have stated that in their view it is Russia's intention that Israel should become their 'beach-head' in the Middle East, and it was for that purpose the Moscow-dominated countries behind the Iron Curtain permitted several thousands of their Jews to emigrate to Israel. At the very least, they argue, these immigrants from Poland, Roumania, Bulgaria and elsewhere 'contain a large number of Communist agents and fifth-columnists'.

Against this there is a growing belief that the Soviet Union is not indifferent to the social injustices of the Middle East, whereas Britain has only interfered in the internal affairs of Arab countries entirely for its own financial or military benefit.

Another factor in the recent spread of Communism is the great mass of Palestinian refugees who have, since 1948, been living in intolerable conditions in refugee camps in the various Arab countries bordering on Palestine. Many of them are educated men accustomed to responsible jobs and a reasonable standard of living. Their growing despair as year follows year and they remain hopelessly and helplessly in wretched camps with nothing to do and only just sufficient food to keep them alive, makes them violently opposed to the West that they feel was responsible for their plight and turns them into ideal subjects for Communist propaganda. There is no accurate way of discovering how many of these hundreds of thousands of refugees have become active members of the Communist Party, but there are hundreds of men and women who have turned into first-class Communist agitators and who are zealously spreading the anti-West pro-Soviet gospel

throughout the Middle East. Even those who do get away from the camps and obtain employment elsewhere seem unable or disinclined to shake off the virus : the bitterness has gone too deep.

Communism has gained many adherents amongst the relatively small number of women in the Middle East who have been able to obtain any education at all, particularly in the more advanced countries of Egypt, the Lebanon and Iraq. Women's status in Moslem countries is still so deplorable that it is only under Communism, they feel, that any improvement can be expected. Their own conservative religion would keep them always entirely subservient to men, with no political and hardly any social status, no power and no prospect of economic freedom. At present Moslem women of the Middle East have no hope of a career and no great chance of securing a vote. Although the harem does not threaten this generation as severely as it did the girls of the last, they know they *must* marry and they must realize they will never share their husband's life or interests. The modern harem of the Middle Eastern towns is not surrounded by lattice, nor are inmates veiled, but they are restricted to a life of limited domesticity. This life is so different from the lives of the many Western women the war brought to serve in the Middle East, so very different from the lives of women seen in films, that discontent is growing rapidly.

Naturally, Soviet propaganda has varying effects in each Arab country.

The centre of the Communist Middle East network was always Beirut, where indeed the Party operated legally until 1948. Now it is far easier to operate an illegal movement under the easy-going Lebanese authorities than it is in Egypt or Iraq. It is known that the Russian Legation in Beirut hands out large sums of money to the agents who work in Arab refugee camps, to printers and journalists, and to trade union organizers. The Party adds to these 'grants' by illegal currency transactions and, it is said, by the Lebanese police, by trading in hashish and white drugs. The production of general leaflets is still carried out in Beirut.

Before Communism was declared illegal the Russians had given the Communist daily in Beirut, *Sawt el Shaab* (circulation was around 10,000), a superb printing press where thousands of leaflets designed for the different communities were printed. The author saw thousands of leaflets printed in Armenian, headed by the sign of the Cross ;

others printed in Arabic under the Star and Crescent ; in Hebrew under the Star of David. Many were written in Kurdish. To-day the Lebanese Communist Party, with sympathizers, is said to be 90,000 strong in a country with a population of around one million people. Special progress has been made in the universities and amongst the youth of the country generally. A lecturer at the American university in Beirut estimates that well over half the undergraduates become Party members and, it should be remembered, they come from all over the Middle East. The Lebanon, owing to its small Christian majority and to French influence, is the most literate of the Arab States ; thus considerable use is made of the illegal leaflet. These leaflets, specially prepared for use in Beirut, are designed particularly to stir up mistrust between the nearly equally balanced Moslem and Christian communities. The Moslems are told that the Lebanon is a bridgehead for Western (Christian) imperialism : the Christians are frightened by stories of the incorporation of the Lebanon in a Moslem union which would cause them to be swamped by the large Moslem sea which surrounds them and which they have for centuries feared.

In Syria social conditions are better than in many parts of the Arab world, but genuine fear of Israeli expansionism, combined with chronic internal political instability, has enabled Soviet propaganda to achieve considerable success. The membership of the illegal Communist Party is somewhere between twenty and thirty thousand, but in addition there are some thousands of sympathizers and followers in every class of society.

The Soviet has continually inflamed Syrian nationalism against the West. The Party has a dual policy towards the scheme for a Greater Syria. At times this is encouraged because it produces restlessness in Damascus and causes a wider rift between the capital and the important city of Aleppo in the north. On other occasions the scheme is opposed because if a Greater Syria were created it might lead to greater Arab solidarity and in the long run in increased economic prosperity.

The Syrian Party, like every other illegal Communist Party in the Middle East, is organized by men and women who have had a thorough training in Moscow.

Communism has been ruthlessly suppressed in Iraq since 1948,

when both the Court and the Government realized how widely its strength was increasing. The Party, which was anyway illegal, had been active in stirring up the demonstrations which led to the rejection of the Portsmouth Treaty with Great Britain, and it was soon afterwards found, in Iraq as well as elsewhere in the Middle East, that many Communists were also Jews, and this gave the Iraqi authorities the opportunity for taking really severe measures. Two or three Jewish Communists, hung from lamp-posts in one of the main squares, had a reasonably salutary effect. It did not, of course, end Communism in Iraq, but it drove it more deeply underground and caused its leaders to take much more care. It also led a certain number of Communists to take an active part in the Right-wing anti-social movements which are continually agitating the surface of Iraqi political life. So long as they could create trouble, make things difficult for the government of the day, and damage Anglo-Iraqi relations, Communists, under whatever disguise they masqueraded, were doing a useful job. The cleverest Communist agitators, however, were believed to be quietly at work in the Iraq Petroleum Company's oilfields and installations where, with labour on an industrial rather than an agricultural basis, it is much easier to organize. Even as long ago as 1946, strikers, whether definitely Communist-led or not did not transpire, were able to seize a pumping station on the oil pipe-line which, in a part of the world where labour is totally unorganized, was an extraordinary feat.

More is known about the activities of Iraqi Communists than those of the other Middle Eastern countries, owing to an excellent piece of work by the Iraqi C.I.D. who managed in 1948 to get several agents into the Party, both in Baghdad and Basra. From this *coup* resulted an official, confidential report which, while it contains nothing sensational to students of Communism, has been of great assistance to the Middle Eastern authorities. One of the most interesting facts to emerge is that in Iraq as elsewhere the Communist organizers are not from the working, but the professional, classes—lawyers, doctors, journalists, and civil servants. The Party produced two weekly underground newspapers, *Azzody* and *Rezkany*, which were printed on a press 'which was the gift of the Tudeh Party in 1943'. In addition a special Kurdish newspaper was produced at irregular intervals and circulated not only amongst the Iraqi Kurds, but also

those of Syria and Persia. In fact the Kurdish movement, as a strong minority movement likely to cause the maximum trouble to the Iraqi and other authorities, was given particular attention by the Communists. The paper advocated the establishment of a 'united Kurdish state' under the leadership of Mullah Mustapha who, in 1948, was said to be in the Soviet Union 'training for the liberation of the Kurds'. The capital of the Kurdish state would be the valuable oil town of Kirkuk, headquarters of the I.P.C. The Russians obviously encourage the establishment of 'Kurdistan', as they did that of Azerbaijan and Israel, in order to split up the Middle East into smaller, newer states in which their influence would predominate.

The report describes the detailed arrangements made for the Communist Parties of all the Arab States to have a unified policy on Palestine. There appears to have been considerable 'guidance' given to the Iraqi Party leaders by the Communist Party of Great Britain, which was 'facilitated by the presence of a few Iraqi Communists in London'. Much of the correspondence with parties outside Iraq was in English, and it is strange that English, too, was the language generally used for communications between the Party and the Soviet Embassy in Baghdad. One paragraph from the report, translated from the Arabic by one of Cairo's Western legations, reads :

'A certain Krikor was the link with the Soviet Embassy. He used to bring the *New Times* magazine and the *Moscow News* for translation and distribution to the rank and file of the Party. The Soviet Embassy asked for frequent reports on the Kurdish situation and these were always quickly produced in English. The Soviet Embassy was always most careful in its contacts with Party members.'

The Secretary-General of the Iraqi Party, who is always referred to as Fahd, appears to have had a similar type of background and career to that of Communist leaders in Europe. He left Baghdad for France in 1934 where he worked for the Communist Party in Paris until he went to Moscow. In Russia he married a Soviet citizen, with whom he returned illegally to Iraq in 1939 to establish an underground Communist Party. Fahd also edited an underground paper called *The Spark* until 1941, when Rashid Ali was overthrown,

and he returned to Moscow where he was appointed Secretary-General of the Party.

Some of the documents which the police captured during raids on Communist cells describe the campaign the Party organized against the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty.

‘The other political parties—Independent, Liberal, and the Democratic Nationalist Parties—promised to bring about the Treaty’s failure inside the Chamber of Deputies while the Communist Party with its satellite organizations began a revolutionary movement against the Treaty which was mainly expressed in demonstrations and strikes. A special committee, which included student representation, was formed to consolidate the working of all the revolutionary elements in the country.’

There seems little doubt that the Communist Party, having come into the open to take the lead in the anti-Treaty movement, was greatly strengthened. The Party claimed to have gained some tens of thousands of additional sympathizers. The actual membership is, however, said to be around fifty or sixty thousand.

EGYPT

| Communism is an ever-present and increasingly serious threat to most of the Middle East, but nowhere more critically so than Egypt, where it is limited at the moment by lack of leaders. When they arise, the whole rotten structure which, one might think, was deliberately erected for the sole purpose of breeding Communism, will be swept away in one of the bloodiest and most horrible revolutions the world has known. It is not only that, except in Persia where conditions are similar, the extremes of wealth and poverty are more apparent, more crushing, in Egypt than anywhere else in the world, but they become increasingly so. Most countries these days have leaders with sufficient common sense to see the way the world is going, to moderate the excesses of the wealthy and to try to do something to improve the lot of the poorer classes. This is not happening in Egypt, a country without an aristocracy which, elsewhere, whatever its grievous faults, had usually a certain sense of responsibility towards the masses. | Egypt is becoming increasingly in the grip of a class of *nouveaux riches* who are blind to all considerations except their own

advancement and the increase of their own riches. A 'popular' government, to distract the attention of a depressed and often actively hungry population from its own shocking shortcomings, is deliberately encouraging the growth of subversive movements which, although they are aimed at the 'British oppressors' and against foreigners generally, are increasing rapidly in strength and will become increasingly difficult to control when, as they must inevitably do, they turn against the country's real oppressors. Mob violence, inspired far too often by Egyptian politicians for their own benefit, is a terribly dangerous double-edged weapon. There has, too, been an uncontrolled increase in a facile type of education in which all the emphasis has been upon sufficient parrot-like knowledge to pass examinations (of which the standards have been steadily lowered), and obtain degrees, and none upon character-building. Far more young men, and women too, have been given this type of education than the country can possibly absorb. In addition, the Islamic religion, still powerful in Egypt, imposes upon its adherents an unquestioning respect for, and obedience to, age, so that it is the old men of Egypt who hold all the power and who jealously prevent youth from advancing. This inbred respect for age and for the teachings of the Koran have always been imagined a sure bulwark against Communism: but it is a bulwark the rats have already seriously weakened. All this, combined with the blatant corruption and inefficiency of the governmental machinery, and with a Court which flaunts its extravagance and its lack of restraints in and out of Egypt, would have been dangerous at any period of history: now it will certainly, sooner or later, be fatal.

It is typical of the inefficiency of the Egyptian Government that despite a large force of 'secret police' in addition to the usual public security forces, Communist agents, whether Egyptians or amongst the tens of thousands of foreigners in the country, are rarely apprehended.

The Egyptian Communist Party, which has always been illegal, began to increase its membership after the Palestine war, when a series of minority governments (supported by the Palace) were so occupied in trying to put down the Right-wing, ultra-religious reactionary Moslem Brotherhood (one of the subversive movements encouraged, for a time, by one section of Egyptian politicians—the

Palace—in their fight for power with the Wafd) that all else was forgotten, either social reform or the Communists. The police discovered ample evidence which politicians and journalists chose to ignore that before the Moslem Brotherhood had been proscribed by Nokrashi Pasha it had been cleverly infiltrated by Communist agents. The terrorist squads of the Brotherhood were, in fact, largely organized by former Communists.

The Prime Minister, Abdul Hadi Pasha, who took over the leadership of the Saadist Party and the premiership when Nokrashi Pasha was assassinated in December 1948, devoted himself to the suppression of the Brotherhood and, to a much lesser extent, of Communism. He inspired the police to intense activity, and large caches of hidden arms were discovered almost every week. Busy with these pre-occupations, the Government neglected all other internal matters. Discontent grew, and, as it grew, the Communists increased the number of their supporters.

The dissatisfied elements of the community were divided roughly into two groups; those who felt the only way to achieve an improvement in the standard of living of the masses was by revolutionary means, and those who believed conditions would be improved if the Wafd were returned to power. The mood of the people grew daily more menacing until in an effort to stem the growing discontent four members of the Wafd were taken into the Government to organize the elections which were due to be held in October 1949. Although the elections were not in fact held until early in January 1950, from the moment the Wafd were taken into the Government the situation was relieved and the spirit of the people changed. Many former Wafdist who believed that Nahas Pasha, after having been in the wilderness for five years, was unlikely ever to return to power, had tended to accept the Communist propaganda at its full value.

For the first six months of the new Wafdist Government's rule, the Communists obtained little support in Egypt. However, during the hot summer of 1950, when the rich Pashas left for Europe and King Farouk took a large part of the Court to Deauville, discontent began to grow rapidly. Why had no measures for social reform been introduced? Why did the country still endure the rigours of martial law and censorship that the Wafd had promised to abolish? Radio sets were tuned to Soviet-controlled stations, which daily reminded

listeners that the Government and the Palace were in league with 'the foreign oppressors'.

A revolutionary plot was discovered in the Army, usually considered to be a most loyal element. It was stated in official circles that the plot was the work of the Moslem Brothers, but it is now thought to have been inspired by one of the Communist agitators within the Brotherhood.

The mood of the people was truly ugly. The Government were worried—so worried indeed that they did modify a few of the more useless restrictions imposed under Martial Law. With the relaxation of certain emergency decrees, the Moslem Brotherhood was revived under new leaders who reorganized it on an efficient nation-wide scale and enabled the underground workers to come into the open. But the Wafdist Government still failed to introduce the measures of social reform which they had promised. The hard-working Ministers for Education and Social Affairs did their best to press the Cabinet into action, but they were unable to obtain sufficient financial support to put any worth-while schemes into effect. The Communists may not at this time greatly have increased the number of their paid-up members, but those who had been sympathetic to Left-wing ideas before the Wafd came into power again became supporters of change—'any change—for no change could be for the worse'.

The term 'Communist' has been loosely used in this chapter, for it is highly unlikely that more than an insignificant minority of the members of the Egyptian or other Middle Eastern Communist parties have ever heard of Karl Marx: nor do they actively support or even think of Soviet Russia. All they seek is some means of changing their lot, of improving their deplorably low standards of life, and it is just this that Communism promises them. They wish to change the existing régime, by revolutionary methods if necessary, but few of them have any idea of what they would wish to put in its place.

The Soviet Union should have been pleased with the success of its agents and tools in their efforts to accentuate, and make propaganda capital out of, the steadily rising discontent. Indeed, after the second summer of Wafdist administration, conditions became so critical that obviously something had to be done. Far, however, from taking the reasonable course of trying to improve conditions the Government followed the old plan, so successful so many times in the past,

of diverting public anger from them to that splendid old scapegoat—the British. The Minister of Social Affairs, one of the few members of the Cabinet trying to do something for the people of Egypt, had resigned in disgust. The King, alarmed by the obvious unpopularity of the Wafd Government, was on the point of insisting upon the passage of a bill initiating an inquiry into one particular aspect of the immense corruption—irregular sales of government land to friends of the Cabinet—when Nahas Pasha produced the red herring. It took the form of the unilateral abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and a demand that British forces immediately leave their treaty zone on the banks of the Suez Canal. The response was electric and gratifying: overnight the Wafd became heroes again, and, in that peculiar Egyptian manner, empty stomachs, filthy hovels, tattered clothes, dirt, disease and despair seemed no longer to matter.

But if this was a success for the Wafd, it was a triumph for Communism. As the British refused to go, the Government gave its blessing and whatever assistance it could to the formation of 'liberation armies', 'struggle squads' and other bands of unruly, undisciplined Egyptian rowdies, whose ostensible object was to 'terrorize' the British troops out of Egypt. In this encouragement of violence, the bearing of arms by illegal, untrained bands, and the breakdown of the civil authority, the Government, in its quite extraordinary blindness, had sealed its own doom and probably that of the régime as well. Half the groups so formed were either members of the Moslem Brotherhood or the Communist Party, or even the two mixed together: the hidden leadership was certainly of Communist inspiration, and these two extreme factions both kept alive the high tide of hatred and savagery which seized Egypt.

There were two possible results: either the British would go, when, after the first flush of triumph, the old discontents would revive, with two very definite additional dangers for the people responsible; British troops, which, in a last resort, were a protection for Palace, Government, and the Pasha class generally, would no longer be within call; and Egyptians had been encouraged to use violence and terrorist tactics; they had been armed and given authority.

On the other hand, the British would maintain their refusal, in which they were strongly backed by the United States, France, and

Turkey, and supported by Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, to turn over to an entirely unreliable Egyptian Army the onus of maintaining a base which is indispensable to the general Western defence effort. Then, the Government, having failed in its desperate gamble, would either have to throw the country into war with the West, open it to a general upheaval indistinguishable from revolution, or do its utmost to restore order and then face again the consequences of its own inefficiency, consequences inflamed by the failure of its diversionary movement.

In any case, in the long run Communism has won the battle for Egypt: won it, moreover, without any necessity really to take part. Only one thing now can keep Egypt out of the Soviet orbit, and that is the country's reoccupation by a Western Power, or combination of Western Powers, who would be prepared to spend enormous sums and great and continual efforts in turning it into a country in which the ordinary people could lead a decent, secure life. No effort of this kind can be expected from the Egyptians themselves.

If the Arab leaders themselves have any specific for Communism it is possibly in the vague idea that they can raise standards of living through increasing industrialization; they disregard both the almost insuperable difficulty of turning agricultural into industrial countries, and also the established fact that Communism is a product of ill-organized, badly administered industrialization.

THE DESIRE FOR INDUSTRIALIZATION

ONE of the more unfortunate impacts of the twentieth century upon the Arab Middle East is the almost universal desire of the small agricultural countries not only to become industrialized, but, in fact, to establish their own heavy industry. This desire, generally incompatible at the same time with their natural resources and the state of education of their populations, arises largely from an ambition on the part of countries which have only recently acquired full independence to feel that they are no longer dependent on the Great Powers for their industrial products and particularly for their armaments. There is, in addition, a feeling that industrialization is the short-cut to wealth and that only lack of industries and a national economy based upon agriculture keeps the Arab countries poor and backward. Few of the politicians and students who call for the establishment of industries stop to consider whether the necessary attributes exist nor even would they to-day accept the foreign experts who could advise them how best to utilize what few resources they possess. Now, too, the Arab who can read and write resolutely refuses to work on the land. He insists on living in a large city—the capital city of his country if possible—and he seeks above all else a job in a government office. At the same time, by a curious process of reasoning, he believes that as a large and highly paid bureaucracy can only be maintained by a great power, his country must immediately become great, and as the only way this can be achieved is through large-scale industrial development, industrialization must be attained forthwith. Disregarding such uncomfortable considerations as statistics or technical reports, or indeed the realities of his country's situation, the Egyptian effendi will argue that as Egypt grows cotton which is exported in its raw state to England and elsewhere, to be turned into textiles and other goods and then resold at a profit to the people who took the trouble to grow it, Egypt must immediately develop its own textile industry and thus reap a double profit. This argument has convinced not only the

student class, but hundreds of thousands of Egyptians and it is now widely believed in the Middle East that industrialization will turn Egypt into a great power overnight and result in an immediate improvement in the standards of living.

It is a waste of time to argue with Arabs who have become convinced that industrialization is the necessary first step towards any real improvement in the lot of the labouring classes. Even those who are aware of them will disregard the wretched conditions in which the relatively few textile workers in Egypt, for example, work and live—hardly better in any way than those of the agricultural labourer. The Egyptian would, further, be perfectly ready to establish heavy industry, a steel plant perhaps, in the overpowering heat of Upper Egypt, near to Assouan, where power could be provided by the electrification works being erected at the Dam. That this would probably entail the death of many of the workmen unless the plant were equipped with air-conditioning and other aids to bearable working conditions—which would probably be so expensive to operate that the plant would run at a loss—would neither occur to him nor indeed strike him as a forceful argument against his scheme. The pressure in favour of industrialization is greatest in Egypt, and the most pertinent argument put forward by Europeans in support of it is that this is the only possible cure for the chronic and ever-increasing pressure of the population. But whether or not industrialization would solve the population problem or merely create fresh difficulties is an open question. It is true, however, that without undertaking major land reforms—already three hundred years overdue—little can be done to improve agricultural production. The Arab in general wishes his country to be able to manufacture all the goods now imported from the West. Only a few intelligent leaders and financiers realize that the countries of the Middle East have neither the necessary raw materials, the fuel or power, nor, indeed, the skilled manpower for the setting up of large industrial concerns. Already industrial development, even in its still somewhat primitive beginnings, has in many cases exceeded the technical competence of the men and women who work in the factories. The quality of, for example, some of the textiles manufactured in Egypt or the glass-ware produced in Iraq is so poor that they cannot be sold even at cut-prices in the local markets.

Patriotism is unfortunately not always sufficient in the Middle East. The younger, educated men and women who call so loudly for the establishment of local industries as an integral part of independence and the fulfilment of national aspirations, are by no means always ready to suffer for their convictions. Faced by two products, a poor, shabby, badly wearing local article and its slightly better but somewhat more expensive imported counterpart, they would be inclined to purchase the foreign product. The rich, of course, make no bones about it: they always buy expensive foreign goods, and, indeed, make most of their purchases during the many months they spend abroad, thus not even benefiting the local shopkeeper.

The most successful of the local businesses are small light industries which have usually developed from concerns started by foreigners and foreign capital. Soap is manufactured in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and the Lebanon, from locally produced olive oil. It is quite good enough for general use, and it is widely bought. But here again, the Pasha class, and the Pasha's womenfolk, would never contemplate giving up the far-better but infinitely more expensive French, British, or American brands. The same four countries make their own cigarettes, but with the exception of Egypt, where the cigarette-making industry was founded and almost entirely run by Greeks, and has become world famous, they are only really satisfactory for the poorer classes. Amongst the upper classes even in Egypt there is nowadays a tendency to smoke British or, more often, American cigarettes merely, one imagines, out of sheer snobbishness. A good drinkable wine is produced in the Lebanon by vintners trained by the French, and there was one large company turning out quite adequate wine in Egypt just before the war. It was a Greek company employing German vintners. The huge demand upon its wares during the drink-starved war years resulted in the local Egyptian wine being sold before it had even begun to mature, but it is understood to have recovered its quality now. Both countries produce a local fire-water called arak, which is similar to the ouzo of Greece, the zibib of Iraq, and a distant cousin of the pernod of France.

There are indeed many minor, almost 'home', industries which have been slowly built up throughout the Middle East, but they are nearly all so small, employing at the most a few hundred people, that they make little mark on the country's overall economy. There

has been no attempt at co-ordination either in the purchase of raw materials, in the sharing of ideas, or in the marketing of the finished product.

The tanning of leather and the manufacture of boots and shoes is widespread: each Middle Eastern country makes its own, from the ornamented, soft-leather desert boot of Arabia to the modern French shoe of Cairo. With a few insignificant exceptions, this industry is not notably successful, although the larger Egyptian factories do turn out superficially good-looking products. The handful of high-class shoemakers, catering for the luxury trade of the larger cities, use only imported, usually British, leather, as the local leather is of poorer quality.

In recent years Egypt has made a determined but ill-directed attempt at industrialization, and official statistics place at ten per cent. the proportion of the population engaged in industry. This figure is accounted for almost entirely by the large textile factories which have sprung up in Lower Egypt and which use locally grown cotton. Despite a promising beginning when British artists, technicians, and foremen were employed, the industry cannot, to-day, do more than supply the lower grades in demand on the local markets. Cotton piece goods were at one time being exported in large quantities to India, but this trade has fallen off, mainly because the Indian mills can produce better goods at lower prices. It is believed that the group of companies operated by the Banque Misr—the all-Egyptian bank founded in 1926 as a counter to the British-run National Bank of Egypt—who operate the majority of Egypt's textile factories, have unsold stocks on their hands worth several millions of pounds for which they can find no market, even at cost price. Before the war Egypt's textile industry supplied around forty per cent. of her requirements. During the war, when imports were scarce, this figure rose to seventy per cent., but with the return of peace and some semblance of proper international trading, it slumped sharply and is now less than the pre-war figure.

Egypt's second industry is sugar refining. This not only supplies her not-inconsiderable local requirements—for the Egyptian has an exceedingly sweet tooth and sugar is as important to the fellah as beer is to the English agricultural labourer—but leaves a little left over for export. Sugar is made from cane grown on a large scale

in Upper Egypt, and the industry could be of far greater value to the country than it is were it not for a good deal of curious manipulation that is in constant process, with rich industrialists and members of the Government playing their part nobly. Third on the list come chemical fertilizers, which are in great demand. A few small factories exist and there are projects for a large factory at Suez and a more important but less-immediate plan for the utilization of electric power generated at the Assouan Dam to operate a very large factory for the production of calcium nitrate. There is also a flourishing cement industry.

At the end of the war there were in Egypt and becoming steadily out of jobs, at least 500,000 skilled or semi-skilled workmen who had been employed in the enormous workshops and repair depots established by the Allied forces. Properly trained, as many of these men had been, they showed surprising aptitude for mechanical work of the type to be found in modern factories, and this large labour force could have been invaluable had there been any means of its utilization. Foreigners, however, for reasons which emerge elsewhere, were reluctant to risk sinking their money in new enterprises—and were, indeed, being steadily forced out of the old-established firms by the new Egyptian labour and Companies laws. With extreme nationalization and carefully nurtured xenophobia always in the air, the possibility of expropriation, added to the difficulty of getting money (profits) out of the country, prevented any inflow of foreign capital. The Egyptians themselves, with certain prominent exceptions, are not inclined to put their money into industrial enterprises: land and house property are the two favourite outlets for surplus capital in Egypt, and both are made to pay handsome dividends. These things to the Egyptian are sure: they contain practically no element of risk at all. Industry, on the other hand, is something new and something far less tangible than cotton-producing land. Factories need attention, money, skill—and even then their product is at the mercy of ordinary economic laws of supply and demand. The Egyptian Government can always be counted upon to bolster up cotton prices when that becomes necessary—the Government and Parliament are full of land-owners. But until an Egyptian is truly a millionaire and has so much money that he can afford to take a slight chance with some of it—and when a man is as powerful as all that the element of chance is greatly reduced—he fights shy of both industry and commerce.

There has been a certain change since the war, but, anyway, until the country became independent in 1936, practically all the large shops and businesses were in foreign hands—Greeks, Italians, Jews, and Armenians predominating. The more intelligent and infinitely quicker-witted Syrians and Lebanese found in Egypt far greater opportunities than were provided by their own small countries. The Palestine war made life exceedingly difficult for the important Jewish community, and a few expropriations were carried out. It is difficult to imagine Cairo without all the large shops, cafés, restaurants, hotels, and companies, which, foreign-founded, some of them half a century ago, and foreign-run until recent years, are now in danger of disappearing, but unless post-war Egyptian legislation is modified and the present anti-foreign atmosphere dies away, disappear they will. Only those enterprises which have been clever enough to 'Egyptianize' themselves will survive—but it will be survival with a difference. Indeed, some of the important British firms who had their Middle Eastern headquarters in Cairo or Alexandria have closed down; the difficulties of an erratic and uncertain exchange control, of obtaining visas and labour permits for their British staff, and coping with the requirements of the Nationality and Company laws, have proved too great. In a few places their place has been taken by American firms against which there is not quite so much ill-feeling and which, moreover, usually receive far greater support from their Embassy and their Government than do British businessmen these days. The United States is quite obviously making great efforts, both official and private, to increase their trade with the Middle East.

Foreigners built up Egypt's great and, still, only real source of wealth, the cotton trade. All the big brokers were foreign, the largest, for many years, British; the technical experts and scientists who improved the plants, found remedies for the various diseases that afflict them, grew new varieties and maintained the purity of the existing strains, were almost all British. All these men, all those firms, have gradually ceased to exist or are now fast losing their importance. Their place has been taken by Egyptians who are not above 'playing the market' or even 'rigging the market' with the invaluable assistance of highly placed officials. Vast fortunes have been made in recent years by methods which can only be termed dubious.

Despite these profound changes, there is still a profitable place

in Egypt for a number of foreign financiers, mainly Greeks and Jews, to whom the complexities of international currency control and exchange regulations are not an obstacle: they are in some ways a godsend. These men, as fluent in Arabic as in English, French, or any other useful language, have relatives in all the big cities of the world and it needs only a telephone call or a telegram to put through deals which break all known regulations but which reap enormous profits.

During the war Britain bought her cotton in bulk and this system—although strongly criticized—has been continued by the Cotton Purchasing Commission ever since. It has proved successful by reason of the character, knowledge, and integrity of their chief buyer, an Englishman with a long experience of Egypt and of the cotton trade. Had he not been completely honest, he could easily have become a millionaire by now from the constant stream of enormous bribes he has been offered by Egyptian cotton brokers.

Despite extraordinary difficulties, forty British insurance companies managed to retain their offices in Egypt until 1951. The language (Egypt wanted, for example, Lloyd's traditional shipping policies translated into Arabic, which has no comparable terms) and staff troubles which resulted from the new legislation have been surmounted as well as competition from favoured Egyptian companies. The fact is that the same xenophobic effendi, who would curse foreign goods and yet buy them because they are better than the local product, infinitely prefers to deal with a British company when it is a question of insuring his flat or his car or any of his property, even his life.

What is perhaps most disturbing of all is the reversion to Oriental methods of a country which has had such close ties for so long with the West. The administrative machine seems to be slipping back rapidly to the days of the Khedive Ismail, when its incompetence, its graft, and its corruption was a byword; and though the exploitation of the fellah has not yet attained the refinements of the Ptolemaic Age, it has reached a high degree of efficiency.

The trend in the other countries of the Middle East is similar but by no means so pronounced as in Egypt. All of them have a vague idea that industrialization is a necessary component of independence, a kind of second cousin of nationalism. They produce plans for the establishment of large modern factories which would

presumably operate on non-existent imports of excessively expensive coal or other fuel, or on electric power that will, Allah willing, be generated from something or other one day. But even the people concerned realize there is an air of unreality about it all: no one, even the sponsors, takes these projects quiet seriously. It must be remembered that none of the Arab countries approaches anywhere near Egypt in population, wealth or the degree of advancement there reached after over sixty years of British tutelage. And, of course with the possible exception of the Lebanon, in none of them is there anywhere near the same proportion of foreigners. Conversely, there is far more to be done in Iraq, Syria, the Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, than in Egypt—although even there there is immense scope for anything calculated to raise the living standards of the masses. Foreign assistance in those countries, financial, commercial, and technical, will be necessary on a steadily ascending scale for years to come if these backward, poverty-stricken territories are to be modernized and enriched. It should, however, be directed to the improvement of agriculture and husbandry or the possible development of mineral resources rather than towards an industrialization for which there is neither place nor need. The world is indeed suffering from a severe shortage of food and agricultural produce. Unfortunately the wave of xenophobia which, basically, originated in Egypt and which was enormously increased by the attitude of the West towards the Arab-Jew struggle in Palestine and the birth of Israel, has washed far and wide over the Middle East, so that there is a tendency everywhere, save in Iraq, to spurn vitally needed foreign aid. The twin niggers in the Middle Eastern woodpile are Israel and Egypt. Israel because the Arab countries are both resentful and afraid, resentful of its victory and its very being, afraid because they know that to exist Israel must not only expand its territory (at their expense), but also achieve commercial and economic domination of the Middle East. The case of Egypt is utterly different. She forms a grave danger because, whilst she owes her prosperity, her large modern cities, her soundly based, if rapidly deteriorating, administration, and all the trappings of a big power she displays so ostentatiously, entirely and utterly to the work of foreigners, she now not only wishes to rid herself of all foreign connexions, but tries to deny that foreigners had anything to do with the building up of modern Egypt. The

lesser Middle East states, taking Egypt at her own valuation, argue that if Egypt has become great by the unaided efforts of her own sons, so can they.

THE LEBANON'S INVISIBLE EXPORT

One of the most important, if not the most important, of the industries of Syria and the Lebanon, particularly the latter country, is the growing and export of hashish. That it is, of course, entirely illegal, that these two countries are members of the United Nations and signatories to the convention on dangerous drugs, and that they have repeatedly affirmed their intention of putting down this noxious traffic matters not a jot: it is highly profitable and that is really all that counts.

In 1950 no less than £18,000,000 worth of hashish was exported from Syria and the Lebanon to Egypt, the great drug-consuming country of the Middle East. 'Exported' is actually an euphemism for 'smuggled', but the smuggling is done so openly and is so well known to the authorities of both countries that it can, with justice, be placed amongst the exports and imports of the countries concerned. It is an ancient trade, for hashish growing has existed in the Levant countries for decades, if not centuries. Sir Thomas Russell Pasha, who, as head of the Egyptian Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau, fought so hard to save Egypt from the drug habit which was creating the most extraordinary havoc in the nation's health and economy, bullied, cajoled and eventually persuaded the French authorities in Syria and the Lebanon to co-operate by banning the growing of hashish, and taking active steps to enforce the ban. Directly French control was lifted, the drug was sown again—usually in the middle of another crop, maize, etc., so that, on a superficial inspection, it can be missed—and the traffic started up in earnest.

During the war a large number of unsuspecting and a few knowing Allied soldiers, whose cars and lorries passed easily from country to country, were agents of Levantine hashish growers and carried large quantities into Egypt. Now the export of hashish is usually accomplished by air. A plane is chartered in Syria or the Lebanon, flown to Egypt to land usually on a disused R.A.F. landing-ground, with which the Western Desert is littered, and the cargo of hashish is off-loaded into waiting lorries. In both countries officials are bribed,

as they can well be, for the profits are enormous. Payment is made in gold, either in sovereigns or sometimes in specie and solid golden ornaments.

In countries with the limited budgets of Syria and the Lebanon this large-scale traffic, while never featuring in the ordinary trade figures, must clearly have a repercussion on the country's economy, and the resultant inflow of money must be apparent to any economist or banker.

In one respect, and only one, has industrialization succeeded in the Middle East, and that is in regard to the petroleum industry. This is limited to those fortunate countries, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, where huge oil deposits have been found, and where the industry provides the bulk of the national income, but it has offshoots in other territories, mainly Syria and the Lebanon, through which oil pipe-lines pass and where terminals and refineries have been established. The petroleum industry, which is dealt with in the preceding chapter, is, however, still entirely in foreign hands and is foreign-run, although it provides steady and profitable employment for tens of thousands of Middle Easterners : in fact, it does somewhat more than that, for it is in the employment of the big foreign oil companies that the youth of the Middle East can obtain the only thorough technical and business training to be obtained in the area. Even in Egypt, a country not blessed with large oil deposits, the small British-operated Anglo-Egyptian Oil Company and its subsidiary services is one of the most solid and stable businesses in the country, and certainly one of the best employers.

CHAPTER XVII

ARAB COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE THE ARAB LEAGUE

THE Palestine war can be said to have made an impression, albeit slight, on all the Arab communities of North Africa and the Persian Gulf which are usually in no way concerned with the affairs of the Middle East. There are three distinct regions : Libya, French North Africa, and the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms, and their inhabitants differ in many ways from those of the Arab League countries. The Libyans and the Persian Gulf Arabs are, on the whole, a little more backward than the peoples of any of the Arab League States except the Saudi Arabians and the Yemenites ; those of French North Africa are more advanced. But all are Moslems and it was on the basis of their faith rather than on any actual interest that their sympathies were vaguely engaged. Another factor is tending very slightly to associate them with their Middle Eastern brethren, and that is the Arab League which, in some way to make up for its failures closer to home, is ready always, usually unasked, to lend its often unwanted support to these Moslem countries in their dispute with Western authority.

It was, however, primarily the Jewish question which brought home to the Arabs of Libya and North Africa the fact that they were Moslems and had a certain solidarity with the Arabs of Palestine and the Middle East. It awakened an unusual hostility to the Jewish communities of those regions and, with that, an increased dislike of Europeans. Although none of these Arab countries outside the League took any more than a token part in the fighting, they were subjected to a barrage of propaganda in the widely circulated Egyptian newspapers and from the broadcasting stations of the Arab States. The echo of this burning question rang but faintly, however, in the ears of the Persian Gulf shiekdoms where the gradually rising prosperity was due to foreign, mainly American, oil companies and where the sheikhs had no wish to embroil themselves with the goose which was laying so many and such large golden eggs.

The new Libyan State, to comprise the former territories of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and the Fezzan, will come into being at the end of 1951, when the powers held by the administering States will be handed over to a provisional Government of Libya. It is probable that soon afterwards a move will be made to bring the new Arab State into the Arab League where, as it is almost certain to enter into formal treaty relations with Great Britain, it is likely to play much the same role as did Jordan up to the time of King Abdullah's death. On the other hand, as there is in sight no leader with either the authority or the strong pro-British loyalties of the Hashimite King, it is just possible that Egypt will be able to infect the Libyans with their current anti-British sentiments.

LIBYA

In general, Libya is a large and mainly barren country composed of a fertile coastal fringe and small scattered inland settlements, where mountains or natural oases have provided sufficient water for a man and his herds to live. The bulk of the population is still nomadic, drifting slowly to the coast when the hot weather dries up the interior of the country. The inhabited areas are at enormous distances from each other and many British Eighth Army drivers will remember well, and not too happily, the forty hour journey between Benghazi, capital of Cyrenaica, and Tripoli, capital of Tripolitania.

The Italians under Mussolini colonized first Tripolitania and later Cyrenaica, and despite the open hostility of the Arab populations, with whom they waged a long-drawn-out war, achieved a certain measure of success which was, however, entirely uneconomic and was heavily subsidized by Rome. Their colonists, concentrated almost entirely along the fertile coastal areas, did not absorb so much as displace the original inhabitants, many of whom fled into Egypt. In 1943, after the years of desert fighting, the Civil Affairs Administration of the British Army made laudable efforts to re-establish the economy of this large area, but were restricted in their efforts by the 'care and maintenance' basis upon which their authority was established: that they did not build a better foundation for the new State in the six years they were there was due to chronic lack of funds, which seriously hampered their efforts, added to continual uncertainty about the future, especially the tortuous ambiguities of the Italian

Peace Treaty which effectively prevented the disposal of former Italian property or anything like the best use of existing resources.

Before the future of these two former Italian Colonies was decided the Egyptians indicated that as a reward for their co-operation with the Allied forces during the war, the United Nations should award Cyrenaica to Egypt to be incorporated under the Egyptian Crown.

The Russians took a somewhat unexpected interest in this strategically important territory, so indeed did the Turks in their lost possessions. The Italians were naturally vitally concerned ; they appeared to believe that they might retain at least a part of their former Empire ; whilst the French who were administering the Fezzan, viewed with the gravest apprehension any proposal which sought to give independence to the Libyan Arabs. They feared, with reason, that a new Arab State in Libya would cause increased dissatisfaction amongst the Arab populations of Morocco and nearby Tunisia.

The United States had no objection to the Arabs of Libya achieving their 'national aspirations'. Washington's main objective was to retain the large air base and refuelling depot called Wheelus Field the U.S. Army Air Force had established at Mallaha, near to Tripoli, which serves as an important link between the Dhahran air base on the Persian Gulf and the new bases on the Atlantic coast in Morocco. Thus, after years of discussion, the future of Libya was decided by the United Nations whose Commissioner, Mr. Adrian Pelt, has had the unenviable task of preparing three widely separate provinces for independence and for amalgamation into one united country.

After many months of deliberation and negotiation the Emir Sayyid Mohammed Idris es-Senussi was finally accepted by the three countries as sovereign of the new State. The Senussi family have been the traditional religious and civil rulers of Cyrenaica and the Fezzan since the early nineteenth century. They led the fight against the Italians from 1912 onwards, and again rendered signal service during the last war. The Emir Sayyid Idris, despite various shortcomings, was the only serious candidate for the post, but there was strong opposition to be overcome from the Tripolitaniens, who did not object so much to the Emir himself as to his large entourage, composed mainly of members of his own family, whom they feared would be given too much power in the public life of the new State. They

were also deterred by the various privileges accorded to the numerous members of the Senussi family who are now virtually monopolizing Cyrenaican economic life. The Tripolitarians are more advanced than either of the other two partners in the State of Libya and, particularly amongst the politically minded youth, there is a certain contempt of 'this Shepherd King'. Opposition also came from the xenophobic members of the Cyrenaican Omar el Mukhtar clubs, a nationalist organization founded in the name of a former Libyan leader killed by the Italians, which are influenced and to a certain extent supported, by Arab League circles in Cairo, and who object to the Emir on the grounds that he is a British nominee.

Inspired, doubtless, by the anti-foreign feeling which is sweeping the Middle East, there is a tendency on the part of the younger generation of Libyans to demand complete independence, free of all ties with the West, but the way of life they desire makes Western support inevitable. They cannot have the trappings of Western civilization in a country which is practically resourceless unless they are prepared to have their independence limited by close ties with a Great Power, which will have to provide the financial and economic backing and the technical assistance which Libya will be bound to need for several decades. The choice before them is clearly between full, unfettered independence, and a return to the simple semi-pastoral life of their fathers, until such time as some kind of workable internal economy has been built up and their country can support itself, and treaty relations with Britain and the United States—with France possibly having some stake in the Fezzan—which will permit foreign bases to be maintained (and paid for) in their country and foreign troops to remain on their soil. There is little doubt that Egypt will continue its attempts to rouse Libyan public opinion against a treaty with Britain and the presence in their country of foreign troops, and if the League, as a whole relaxes its efforts, Egypt, which has denounced the present Libyan authorities as British puppets and claimed a measure of political control over its 'younger Arab brothers', will intensify its campaign.

The Constitution and Electoral Law of the new State was drawn up by the United Nations Co-ordinating Committee. It provides for a hereditary monarchy with a federal representative form of government through the three component provinces. There are to be two Chambers. The Senate is to consist of twenty-four members

equally divided between the three provinces, half being nominated by the King and the other half by the three provincial legislative councils. The full term of service in the Senate is to be eight years with election of half the members every four years. The first Senate is to be appointed by the King for a four-year period.

The House of Representatives is to be an elected body on the basis of one Deputy to every 20,000 inhabitants, and, pending a population census, Tripolitania is to have thirty-five members, Cyrenaica fifteen, and the Fezzan five. This was a thorny point, as the Tripolitarians, who claim a population of 750,000, were apprehensive of any arrangement which would allow them to be out-voted by Cyrenaica and the Fezzan, thought to have populations of 300,000 and 40,000 respectively. It is also true that outside the large towns the bulk of the population is quite illiterate and politically immature, and they have been given a Constitution based on a Western pattern. In fact, owing to deliberate neglect by the Italians of even elementary education there is likely for many years to be a serious dearth of Libyans capable of holding jobs in the administration. The new country will clearly have to retain foreign advisers and even increase their number. Certainly, too, Libyans cannot expect to attract any influx of foreign capital until there are clearer indications of the course the new State will chart. There is no industry and it is difficult to see how it could be established, but there is clearly considerable scope for irrigation schemes. Oil, that great balancer of some Middle Eastern budgets, has not been discovered and prospects are not thought to be bright. In fact, there is a great similarity between the Libya of to-day and the Jordan of the time before the Palestine war, and the best prospects for the economic survival and social and political advancement of the Libyans is a treaty with Britain, or the Western Powers generally, which will earn them revenue from bases and facilities rented to the treaty partner. It would indeed obviously be to the advantage of Libya to organize an armed force on the lines of the Arab Legion with British officers to train and administer it. There is every reason to believe that if a Libyan Arab Legion were brought into being, the British Government would be willing to make a grant-in-aid towards its maintenance. It would not only provide the internal security force which the new State must have, but could become an integral part of the Middle East Defence system. American

outlook has changed radically since the time only a year or so ago when a plan of this kind was strongly criticized by the United States.

The Constitution also provides for a Supreme Court to consist of a president and judges appointed by the King. Each province is to have a Wali (Governor) appointed by the King and assisted by an executive council, three-quarters of which must be elected. Islam is declared to be the State religion, but the rights of minorities to practise their own religions is expressly provided for : similarly, whilst Arabic is declared to be the official language, freedom is guaranteed for the use of any language in private transactions, religious publications, cultural matters, and public meetings ; this provision was probably inspired by the xenophobic insistence on the use of Arabic in Egypt since full independence was attained. Tripoli and Benghazi will form the ' dual capital ' of the State.

THE GULF SHEIKHDOMS

To the east of the Arab States the Gulf Sheikhdoms form a series of important Arab communities which are not officially connected with the Arab League. At least three of these sheikhdoms owe their prosperity entirely to the fact that large deposits of petroleum were discovered to be within their domains. The actual petroleum industry is discussed in a separate chapter, but without it the area would be ignored or merely mentioned as of strategic interest in wars and earlier as romantic hide-aways for pirates and centres of pearling fisheries.

BAHRAIN

Bahrain is ' the strategic centre for Britain's position in the Gulf '. It is, therefore, the most important sheikhdом in that it houses the Political Resident for the Persian Gulf, the headquarters of the Royal Navy, Persian Gulf Command, an important R.A.F. station, and a large and busy aerodrome which is one of the main junctions between east and west.

The climate of Bahrain is bad, so indeed is the climate of the whole Gulf. With a summer temperature of around 105° to 110°, matched by a humidity of over ninety per cent., the European and American inhabitants must take elaborate precautions against prickly heat and Bahrain boils. For the short winter months the climate is delightful and enchanting. Bahrain is a prosperous island where income exceeds

expenditure. There is no national debt, no unemployment, no poverty on Arab standards, and almost no crime. So low-lying as to be nearly awash in the greeny waters of the Persian Gulf, it is in reality a large coral reef and its little one-storey houses are built of coral and palm fronds. Not, however, the blushing pink coral of necklaces but a dingy greyish substance designed for utility not adornment. At one time, like other places in the Gulf, it had two main industries: pearl fishing and trading. To-day, pearling has been replaced by oil, but trading remains and has been intensified, so that the island's annual income from customs' duties and transit charges still almost equals its oil royalties.

Oil, however, provides the main source of revenue because in addition to the royalties from the oil extracted by B.A.P.C.O. (Bahrain Petroleum Company) from its wells at Ahwali, the company's refinery, which treats more oil from the Saudi Arabian wells, less than twenty miles away, than it does the local product, gives steady employment to some 5,000 Bahrainis.

Bahrain's prosperity and the outstanding excellence of its administration is due almost entirely to a most remarkable Englishman, Mr. C. Dalrymple Belgrave, who has been for twenty-four years adviser to successive sheikhs. He is virtually Prime Minister and has as his chief assistants half a dozen other Englishmen who control the key posts, such as the customs, food control, public works, and police. They have ensured that the fullest advantage is taken of the revenue from the Petroleum industry and Bahrain's unrivalled position as chief trading centre in the Gulf, to which goods come from as far afield as India and Pakistan, Persia and Egypt, South Africa and the Trucial Coast, to be stored in Bahrain's transit zone at a charge of two per cent. commission and a small fee for handling and storage, before being sold to merchants in other parts of the Eastern world. There is also a flourishing trade done in the island, where customs duties ranging from five per cent. on necessities to fifteen per cent. on cigarettes and drinks are probably the lowest in the world. The crowded, attractive bazaars of Manama—the main town—are packed with rare luxuries from the new and old worlds, and people come from all the surrounding countries to buy them. Americans from the oil towns of Saudi Arabia spent as much as \$500,000 a month in 1949 in Bahrain. It is, of course, the cheapness and the consequent profusion

of goods that attract them and it is greatly to the credit of Mr. Belgrave and his assistants that in a world of steadily rising prices, caused mainly by steadily rising duties, the goods in Bahrain's bazaars remain steadily cheap. But even in this well controlled little country there was a tendency for the cost of living to rise. So a rationing scheme was introduced, under which essential foodstuffs are sold by government agencies at fixed prices and quantities. Every inhabitant of Bahrain is entitled to the following rations per month :

3 pounds of sugar at 6d. per pound.
6 pounds of rice at $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound.
8 pounds flour at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound.

What, however, immediately strikes every visitor from England is the extraordinary cheapness of cigarettes and liquor. Players are 3s. 9d. per one hundred, and whisky costs between 9s. and 10s. per bottle ; gin between 6s. 9d. and 7s. 6d. Beer is the most expensive tipple at 1s. 7d. a pint. And Bahrain is a dry island ! Strictly dry. Any Bahraini found drinking alcohol in any shape or form is seized by the very smart Bahrain police in their khaki uniforms and gorgeous red turbans and sent off to serve six months on an island prison—in irons. The Sheikh, His Highness Salman al Khalifa bin Khalifa, is, however, a broad-minded and tolerant ruler. As the drinking of alcohol does not infringe the religious dictates of foreigners, then they may drink what they please, so long as it is not sold in local shops : liquor has to be imported by special licence.

The Sheikh is a loyal and sincere friend of Britain's and carries on a friendship begun when his grandfather, Sheikh Isa, signed a treaty with the British Government in 1880, by which he agreed not to enter into any relationship with a foreign government without the consent of Britain. Later, in 1914, the Sheikh further agreed not to exploit petroleum deposits or sell concessions for their exploitation to anyone without first obtaining British approval.

The success of the Persian Government in driving out the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company from Abadan may well cause repercussions in Bahrain as the Persian Government, who ruled the island until the end of the eighteenth century, have never ceased to claim sovereignty over it. The discovery of large petroleum deposits naturally increased their interest and the Tehran Government have caused considerable

inconvenience by refusing to admit to Persia any holder of a British passport which contains a permit to enter Bahrain; thus many petroleum experts are forced to carry two passports, one for entering Bahrain and one for Persia.

Although the Persian claim to Bahrain can be dismissed as without foundation and likely, moreover, to find not a shred of support in the island itself, it would be sensible, this time, for the British and American Governments to act in concert—and in advance. A plain hint that both Powers would together resist any Persian attempt to grab Bahrain would possibly avoid a good deal of trouble. It is important that the West should proclaim a united front in questions of this kind, where Western defence interests are involved, for Persia, or any Moslem country, can these days count upon the solid backing of the Arab League and indeed all other Moslem States. The fact that none of her new friends would give any active assistance to Persia should not obscure the fact that they can jointly produce a strong addition to the Russian anti-Western vote in U.N.O. and can stir up agitation in various parts of the explosive Middle East.

The Bahrain archipelago has a total population of not much more than 120,000 with a British and American community of over 1,500, the majority of whom work in the oil company. It is interesting that although B.A.P.C.O. is in fact an American company—established in Canada in order to avoid the British bargain with the Sheikh that non-British companies would not be allowed to operate in Bahrain—ninety per cent. of the European staff are British. B.A.P.C.O. is in fact jointly owned by the Standard Oil Company of California and the Texas Oil Company.

KUWAIT

Kuwait is not an island but a large piece of practically barren desert joined, in the north, to Iraq by a narrow neck of land; a larger expanse of desert separates it from Saudi Arabia to the east. It has one of the best natural harbours in the Persian Gulf and lived a tranquil existence for decades on the proceeds of some first-class smuggling, pearling, and ship-building—the best Persian Gulf dhows were built in Kuwait. Few Europeans visited the highly attractive little walled town where, however, the climate is excessively hot and there was no drinking water. Suddenly it was discovered that under

the untroubled desert sands lay one of the largest known reserves of petroleum in the world and almost overnight Kuwait became potentially a country of unimagined wealth.

What effect this sudden unexpected prosperity will have on the population of 150,000 mainly nomadic Beduin depends upon the wisdom of the new Sheikh, Abdullah al Salih al Salah, who succeeded his father in 1950. In similar treaty relations with Britain to those which ally her to most of the Trucial and Persian Gulf sheikhdoms, Kuwait has not so far had the benefit of expert British technical advice. There had long been an adviser, but there was remarkably little about which he could give advice. To-day the situation is entirely different and the new advisers have begun their task under the serious disadvantage of trying to guide a man who is already a multi-millionaire and who is, at times, inclined to resent interference in the administration of his small kingdom and the spending of his vast fortune. In addition to rapidly increasing oil royalties, Kuwait is also benefiting from various subsidiary offshoots of the petroleum industry—building and construction, employment of local labour, supplying the needs of the British and American staff—and there are now sometimes over twenty ships a month in the little harbour where formerly there was one. The bazaar has expanded, new shops are springing up, and merchants now sell goods from all parts of the world. The narrow streets of the old walled city through which loaded donkeys formerly passed with difficulty are being rebuilt. The harbour has been modernized in order to handle cargoes more quickly. The property owners who suffer in the new town planning scheme are being compensated by the Sheikh. However, by far the most important result of the accession of wealth to Kuwait is the provision of drinking water which was formerly carried by dhow a distance of eighty-miles from the Shatt-el-Arab river. The water was off-loaded into tanks on the seafront and then carried to the dwelling houses in goat skins or petrol tins. Although the water only cost $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per gallon at the seafront, it fetched as much as 7d. per gallon in the outlying parts of the town. The petroleum company made efforts, quite naturally, to provide water for their own employees. They drilled, but the water they found was unfit for drinking, so they brought water to the town in tankers; the latest development is that a water distillation plant has been installed. The Sheikh has

recently been persuaded to erect a similar distillation plant with a capacity of 650,000 gallons daily for the people of the town. In 1945 the old Sheikh opened a State hospital with over a hundred beds and up-to-date equipment. He also enormously improved the educational system which was in its infancy. There are now about twenty schools and nearly 7,000 pupils. The petroleum company have naturally attempted to ensure that the pupils receive some elementary technical education in addition to the more normal daily readings from the Koran. They have been successful to a limited degree and some of the pupils are taught up to secondary school standard. The course includes typewriting both in English and Arabic. Some hundred of the brighter pupils have been sent to universities in Egypt and a few to England.

The British advisers in Kuwait are trying to persuade the Sheikh and his Government to endow his various foundations and conserve his enormous financial resources for the future.

By a new oil agreement announced in December 1951, the Sheikh of Kuwait will receive from the petroleum company in 1952, royalties amounting to £50,000,000. Additional and lavish expenditure on further public services can absorb but a small part of this vast sum.

The countries to the north-west—Jordan, Syria, and the Lebanon—are in urgent need of loans for development projects, which they would prefer to acquire from Arab, rather than Western, sources. Will Kuwait make its millions available to borrowers? Unhappily this will only be done if the advisers—British and American—on the spot are able to ‘sell’ the idea to the Sheikh.

At worst it is hoped that a small part of the vast sums to be received from petroleum royalties will be contributed to the resettlement of Arab refugees and the works projects necessary to enable these displaced Palestinians to become self supporting.

QATAR

This sheikhdom is smaller than Bahrain or Kuwait, with a population of less than 25,000 Arabs. The Sheikh has signed the usual agreement with Britain which includes a clause which makes the granting of petroleum or pearling concessions or other monopolies dependent on British consent. The Iraq Petroleum Company own the petroleum concessions and they have recently finished constructive

work on the important field of Dukhan. Production began in 1950 and already the Qatar fields produce more than their nearest neighbour, Bahrain. There is as yet no clear indication of the potential reserves, but it is thought that the field is an important one: exploration is, however, still in progress. This company after twenty-five years of experience in working with Arabs is less likely to make mistakes in their relations with either the ruler or their employees than the newer companies now operating in the Gulf.

A GULF CURRENCY

The British Treasury has been faced with serious financial problems which really arise as a by-product of the sudden vast wealth which petroleum has brought to the three shiekhdoms.

The three principalities still use the Indian rupee as their currency, and, until recently, the bulk of their trade was with India. Small dhows and other coastal ships brought cotton goods from Bombay and carried away pearls and other local produce as they had been doing since the East Indian Company first established treaty relations with the Sheikhs around 1820.

The change in India combined with the setting up of large new Anglo-Saxon oil communities has entirely altered the pattern of trade. Although there are no statistics of any kind available, the bazaars appear to be stocked almost entirely with goods from the United Kingdom and the United States and the merchants state that there is, to-day, hardly any trade with India. There is, in fact, little contact between Hindu India and the Moslem Persian Gulf.

Obviously the British Government has no control over the rupee, but though the currency situation at times appears to be urgent the Treasury seem prepared to let sleeping dogs lie. The British petroleum companies and more than one British economic expert who has visited the area are anxious to replace the rupee as legal tender, by a Gulf dinar, which would be equal in value to the £1 and linked to sterling. Owing to the number of Americans working in the Gulf and the large sums paid in dollars to certain rulers in the region, there is everywhere an open market for currencies of every kind as well as gold.

The possibility of a currency for the Gulf Sheikhdoms in the Gulf has led to informal and entirely unofficial discussion amongst member

States of the Arab League, about the possibility of uniting the Arab Sheikhdoms into a loose Federation or a sovereign State. Naturally the members of the Arab League feel their position would be greatly strengthened by the addition of a new and rich Arab State. Arab League officials have, in the past, accused the Gulf Sheikhs of 'being disloyal to the Arab cause' and they feel that to bring the Sheikhs into the sphere of influence would do nothing but good. But no Arab League official has yet put forward any serious plan, nor would it be easy to devise a scheme which would bring these rich, highly independent, and sometimes mutually hostile Arab leaders, together.

THE MIDDLE EAST TO-DAY

THE Palestine war and the emergence of the State of Israel—‘a dagger in the heart of the Arab world’—have had far wider repercussions throughout the Middle East as a whole than were immediately apparent. In the first flush of enthusiasm and thoughtless optimism, the fight against the Jews brought the Arab countries closer together than, possibly, they had ever been before ; it breathed new life into the Arab League ; and it even seemed to dim the fierce rivalries which had separated Arab rulers. It was, too, for the Arab world generally, an even more successful means of distracting the attention of the masses from their own hopeless plight and the futility and inefficiency of their governments than had been even the long-drawn-out struggle against foreign ‘oppression’ of various kinds. But with the end of the war and the knowledge, which even a strict censorship and the continual publication of utterly false claims could not entirely conceal, that Arab arms had failed dismally, bitter disillusion swept through the Middle East, a disillusion which quickly found its immediate expression in mutual recrimination amongst the member States of the Arab League and its final flowering in the castigation of England, in particular, and also America for having let down the Arabs, encouraged treachery amongst them, and given ample support to the Jews.

Those were first thoughts, and although they persisted as a kind of uncomfortable, monotonous undertone, it was the fact that Israel had been founded and, despite all they could do, was firmly established, that caused really serious concern to those few Arab leaders capable of consecutive thought. Israel, they saw, was strong, relatively far stronger than any grouping of Arab States ; Israel could always count upon full American backing ; Israel, it had been clearly demonstrated, could outmanœuvre not only the Arabs but also the United Nations and any other international authority, was a past-master in the skilful use of the *fait accompli*, and could turn almost any situation, any catastrophe, to her own use. The new State had been

founded, amongst other things, to save hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees, and it had immediately created hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees. But it *had* been founded and, like it or not, its American sponsors could never let it collapse. All this, the Arab leaders, and anyone else who had watched the development of the Palestine conflict and the birth of Israel with an impartial eye, saw quite clearly, but it was not that aspect of the problem that frightened them. What gave Arab leaders their equivalent of a sleepless night—a sleepless afternoon—was Israel's future course.

At the termination of the Mandate the population of Palestine was roughly 1,200,000 Arabs and 650,000 Jews. Partition, and the subsequent fighting, while giving Israel four-fifths of the fertile portion of the country, had certainly reduced the overall area of what was, at the beginning, a by no means under-populated land. Yet into this extremely small space the Israeli Government had pledged itself to settle, and was implacably determined to cram in, every single Jew who wanted to come or who they could induce to come to their new State. The Zionist leaders were always vague about numbers, and indeed the potential number of Jewish immigrants is quite impossible to determine. But already the population of Israel has grown to around 1,300,000 and more Jews are entering every week. Could this continually increasing population, increasing both by immigration and the normal but, in Israel, accelerated process of excess of births over deaths, continue to exist and maintain the comparatively high standards of living which the Israeli leaders demanded, within the confines of this small and economically extremely limited territory? Although both the rate of immigration and the standards of living have been decreased, the Arab leaders genuinely fear that to exist at all Israel must expand, and expand at their expense. Their experiences during the Palestine fighting had left them with few illusions either that Israel would observe United Nations rulings or that U.N.O. would take any effective steps if Israel broke its undertakings; Israel, they had seen, acted first—and blandly refused to talk afterwards. Nor had they the slightest faith in assistance from the Great Powers or any disciplinary action by any of the Powers, whether joined to the Arabs by treaties or not, should Israel commit any act of aggression, large or small, against them.

The relations with Britain of the Arab States, in particular Egypt

which, increasingly so since the end of the second world war, had assumed the leadership of the Middle East, had by now reached nearly their lowest ebb. They had been extremely bad in 1946 and 1947, in which year Egypt appealed to the Security Council against the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and had attempted to bolster up what was clearly a losing case by an extraordinary campaign of misrepresentation and abuse, but when it was no longer possible to hide from the masses the failure of the Palestine campaign, Egyptian politicians outdid themselves in the violence of their calumnies against Britain. 'The Egyptian Press was filled with accusations, still believed by the great mass of Egyptians, that the advance of the Arab armies was stopped in accordance with a secret Anglo-Jewish agreement', said Professor H. A. R. Gibb in an address to Chatham House in September 1951. More important from the viewpoint of the inner stability of the Middle East, relations between the Arab States, never more than surface-cordial, were by now frankly bad. Egypt, always the most vocal and intemperate of them all, launched wild accusations that her Arab allies, again to quote Professor Gibb, 'had basely deserted her and left her to carry out single-handed the agreed policy of the Arab League not only against the Zionists, but against American technique, Soviet armaments, and British intrigue'. If Egypt's ire was directed at any one particular country, it was Jordan, for not only had the Arab Legion, according to Egyptian allegations, refused to continue the fighting and thus left the Egyptian forces to face the 'entire Israeli Army', but King Abdullah had virtually incorporated the Arab-held portions of Palestine into the State of Jordan. As King Abdullah, in face of very considerable difficulties, was administering this territory and at the same time caring for the bulk of the Palestine refugees, and as there was no possibility of the establishment of a Palestine Arab Government, let alone a Palestine Arab State, the joining-up with Jordan was the only reasonable solution. His action, however, led to strong attacks upon Jordan in the Arab League Council and for a moment it appeared likely that Egypt would succeed in lining up the other members behind her effort to have Jordan expelled. Extra pressure was exerted by the League's invitation to the All-Palestine Government—a puppet body led by the Mufti which had been established some time earlier in a suburb of Cairo and whose contribution to the Palestine war had been an enormous amount of

intrigue—to attend the deliberations. But the Yemenite delegate, grateful to King Abdullah for his support of the Crown Prince when, after the old Imam's assassination, the other Arab States were hesitating whether to recognize the new régime, refused to vote against Jordan, and as Jordan refused to resign, the League remained as it was. Egypt's attempt to dominate the League came to a head at this time and when the other States refused to be dominated, there was a strong movement inside Egypt for withdrawal from the League. Egypt was advised by her virulent Press to turn her back on these 'backward Arab nations', but as she was at the same time quarrelling violently with the West, there seemed some doubt to whom she should turn.

There is no doubt that Israel's contribution to the Middle East has been an enormous amount of chaos and confusion. If, physically, the State of Israel lies across Egypt's land communications with the rest of the Arab world and, except for the developing but still small and limited port of Aqaba, deprives Jordan of an outlet to the sea, spiritually she has cut right across the life of her neighbours, whose relations have never entirely recovered from the fiasco in which their one attempt at co-operation ended. Israel has, if one may say so, turned the Arab countries in upon themselves, awakened general suspicion, and given a strong impetus to the rabid Arab nationalism which was always just beneath the surface. All the Middle East countries fear Israeli expansion, if not military then certainly economic, for they have sufficient sense to realize that in the last resort Israel's continued existence at anything above the level of a poor agricultural country depends upon her obtaining control of Middle East economy and finance in addition to dominating Middle Eastern trade. The success of the one or two defiant gestures the Arab countries have been able to make—Iraq's refusal to let oil flow to Haifa, Egypt's determination in face of repeated and increasingly strong international protests, to prevent tankers passing through the Suez Canal with oil for Israel, and the general boycott of Israeli goods—which are contributing to the new State's desperate economic plight, has led to an exultant feeling that even if the Arabs lost the war they are winning the armistice. But at the same time the wave of mistrust, unrest, and violence which has marked the Middle East since the end of the Palestine war may well have its origin or at least its inspiration in the violent passions then let loose. One by one the leading figures of

the Middle East are falling to the assassin's bullet—Mahmud Fahmi Nokrashi Pasha, Colonel Husni Zaim, Riad Bey es Solh, King Abdullah, and the list is certainly not ended. Even the perpetual *coups d'état* in Syria, where political instability has reached new heights, and the bloody disorders in Egypt which followed the abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, can be indirectly traced to certain facets of the Palestine war. Behind a façade of nationalistic defiance, the Middle East countries are scared and bewildered: they can no longer trust each other, they can no longer trust the West, and they fear to trust the East: what are they to do? Can they cut themselves off completely from the two great opposing blocs which seem to be seeking to divide the world, and become a kind of second Switzerland? They would dearly like to, but—would it be safe? In fact, they realize that their geographical position, their strategic situation, and the possession under some of their lands of the oil both West and East so badly need precludes neutrality. But lack of bold clear-sighted leadership is allowing them to drift towards dangerously deep waters.

When Egypt contemptuously rejected the Four Power invitation to participate on terms of equality in a Middle East Defence Council, rejected it so rapidly that it could barely have been read and was certainly not studied, the other Middle East states were in a quandary. They were all ready to support Egypt in her abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, and to take her side in her violent dispute with Britain, but the defence proposition was entirely another matter. They were under no illusions concerning their capacity for defence, either singly or in any purely Middle Eastern bloc, and they placed little trust in the protection Egypt could offer them—or even herself. They knew that, should Russia attack, they would be immediately overrun, and while a Russian occupation might hold no terrors for, and might indeed improve the lot of, the oppressed lower-classes, the very thought of it sent cold shivers down the spines of the ruling classes. The Western plan, too, presented definite advantages. It would mean increased aid and modern arms and equipment for the Middle Eastern armies. It would bring the Middle East firmly into the Western sphere of influence, certainly, but it would mean the end of one-Power domination, and unwelcome as would be a return of French influence to the Levant States, and unpalatable the presence

of Turkey as one of the dominant partners, four Powers would be far easier to deal with than one. Behind their habitual show of intransigence, the other Middle East countries are far more realistic than Egypt because they do not, like her, consider themselves Great Powers.

It is this illusion of grandeur that is the cause of Egypt's shocking mishandling of her relations with other countries, even her Arab partners, just as the corruption, inefficiency, and greed of her governments obliges them, for their own protection, to stir up the masses to anti-foreign excesses. Certainly Britain has handled her relationship with Egypt deplorably badly. From the beginning, seventy years ago, our occupation of Egypt was half-hearted, punctuated by periodical intimations that we were on the point of leaving and were only remaining until we had put the country on its financial and economic feet. The British and other foreign elements—and anyway until the outbreak of the 1939 war, the Greeks were the second largest community after the Egyptians and the Italians the third—have brought enormous material prosperity to Egypt, if not to the masses of Egyptians, but apart from that, apart from the splendid cotton crop, an excellent irrigation system, good railways, two large modern towns and three important harbours, a few reasonable roads, a constitution which is entirely unsuitable, and an educational system which produces annually tens of thousands semi-educated young men and women for whom jobs do not exist, British control seems to have left no lasting mark on Egyptians except a legacy of hatred and mutual dislike. We have not even left any strong cultural impression and French, not English, is the country's second language. British control and the presence of large numbers of British officials did nothing to eradicate, and may even have contributed to, the growth of an immensely wealthy upper class which, representing roughly five per cent. of the population, owns ninety-five per cent. of the national wealth. We made no sustained attempt to introduce land reform or to help the fellaheen, whose extraordinary capacity for unending labour on entirely insufficient nourishment and lacking any ordinary creature comforts has been the basis of so many Egyptian fortunes, obtain a share of the land or even anything like an adequate return for their labours. We managed during most of the occupation to keep corruption to a minimum, but did nothing to eradicate it

from the Egyptian character or even to inculcate the idea that it was wrong—only that it was unwise to be caught. During the latter years, when Egypt was technically independent but still ‘assisted’ by a large number of British advisers and officials, we had introduced certain labour laws, and income and other taxes, but we never took positive steps to assure that they were put into practice, and when the realization had begun to spread that our continual support of the Pasha class was getting us nowhere and that, in the long run the future of Egypt would be in the hands of the increasing industrial and working classes, we made only the sketchiest efforts to train leaders and encourage a proper trade union movement, which could have been our most valuable friend and asset in Egypt.

Certainly Egyptians are not promising material. They are an amalgam of the original inhabitants and the long line of conquerors who have ruled the country since the closing years of the Pharaonic era, with the original strain growing progressively weaker. They have been under foreign domination since the Persian occupation of some 500 B.C. and have in the intervening years developed some characteristics of a subject race. It is, therefore, quite understandable that when independence was finally achieved, it went to their heads, particularly as Egypt is far and away the largest, strongest, and richest country in her own particular area. Her membership of the United Nations and other international organizations gave her a world platform from which to air her views and added considerably to her self-importance, but has as yet produced no corresponding sense of responsibility or co-operation. Her basic quarrel with Britain since the end of the last war has been her demand for the removal of British troops from the Canal Zone, as their presence damaged her sovereignty and prevented the full realization of her ‘national aspirations’, but in the same breath that she condemns ‘British imperialism’ Egypt demands the right to set up an imperialism of her own by incorporating the Sudan into her territory. There is a certain amount of misunderstanding of the Sudan question, owing mainly to the continuous flood of completely false and even deliberately lying Egyptian propaganda. The Sudan, of which the population is a mixture of negroid, Hamitic and Arab races which, over a long period of time, has produced a distinctive national type, was invaded and conquered by the Turco-Egyptian armies of Mohammed Ali at the beginning of the

nineteenth century. The occupation, which lasted a little over half a century, was marked by a shameful maladministration and oppression, and eventually resulted in a revolt which drove out the Egyptian forces. Sixteen years later the British Government, whose occupation of Egypt coincided with the Mahdi's revolt in the Sudan, sent a combined Anglo-Egyptian force under Lord Kitchener to reconquer the country. An Anglo-Egyptian Convention of 1899 established a Condominium which, in theory, set up a joint Anglo-Egyptian administration of the Sudan. In fact, the administration has always been almost entirely British until, in more recent years, the Sudanese themselves began to play their part. In the half century the Condominium has lasted the number of Egyptian officials in the Sudan has been small. In the first place there were, until comparatively recently, no Egyptian officials of the calibre or character necessary for employment in posts where one of their main tasks would be to train Sudanese, and, then, nothing on earth would induce the average Egyptian to go to live and work in the Sudan, regarded from the flashy modernity of Cairo as a barbarous, savage country. The insistent Egyptian demands for full sovereignty over the Sudan are, in all but one respect, based upon nothing more solid than a desire for easy aggrandizement—the 'Empire building' they so loudly condemn in others. It is backed inside the Sudan by no real desire for union with Egypt; despite the expenditure of a great deal of Egyptian money and effort in an attempt to spread propaganda and build up a pro-Egyptian party, the number of pro-Egyptian Sudanese dwindles rather than increases. Indeed any serious attempt now to unite the two countries would be most strongly resisted in the Sudan and in the event of a 'show-down' everybody who knows both peoples would unhesitatingly put their money on the Sudanese, a brave, determined, and self-reliant people whose progress towards the level necessary for independence and self-government, under one of the best of all British administrative services, has been quite remarkable. Incidentally, the Sudan Defence Force, jointly officered by British and Sudanese, is quite the most efficient military unit in the Middle East—if one can include the Sudan in that area. Usually about 10,000 strong, it was increased to 30,000 during the world war and served on various fronts with great distinction. The only respect in which Egyptian insistence upon the unity of Egypt and the Sudan

has any sincerity, any validity, is the feeling, encouraged over the years by declarations by British statesmen, that control of the Sudan is essential to Egypt's water supply. While most publicly expressed fears that an independent Sudan might tamper with the waters of the Nile and so ruin Egypt 'practically over-night' are exaggerated—any serious diversion of the Nile waters would require a tremendous feat of engineering—it is clear that an agreement on this matter must precede any declaration of Sudanese independence. At the same time every encouragement should be given to close collaboration and association between these two sister countries—a collaboration that is not being fostered by the attitude adopted by Egypt that she has hereditary rights over the Sudan. There is probably nothing to prevent the King of Egypt assuming also the title of King of the Sudan, but there would be some million Sudanese ready to oppose any attempt to implement that implied claim.

It is easy to see why persistent efforts to settle Anglo-Egyptian differences have failed so resoundingly. On the Sudan question Britain could not give way: her undertakings to the Sudanese were too explicit, her role in that country too clear-cut to be renounced even for the settlement of a dispute which grows steadily more difficult and more dangerous. On the other point at issue, the Suez Canal base, a wiser course could well have been followed. British errors have been both psychological and material. In the first place, the Bevin-Sidki agreement of 1946 did provide for the complete evacuation of British forces under specific Egyptian guarantees to maintain the base and to enter into a military alliance with Britain for the joint defence of the Middle East. That Egypt refused to accept this agreement and that by the time negotiations were resumed, the world situation had changed, the vague Russian threat had become a reality, and British military leaders were adamantly opposed to withdrawing from Egypt, could not be expected to weigh heavily with a country whose fundamental desire was to remain neutral, who saw, or affected to see, just as grave a threat from 'British imperialism' as from Russian Communism. All that mattered to the Egyptian Government of Mustapha el Nahas Pasha, which had returned to office at the beginning of 1950 after general elections in which they obtained an impressive majority, was that Britain was offering them worse terms than they had been prepared to grant a minority

government. Quite clearly a Wafdist Cabinet, already being harried by the opposition, could not accept. Anglo-Egyptian relations have, over the years, become the plaything of internal Egyptian politics and it is the bounden duty of successive Wafdist and minority governments to obtain better terms than their immediate predecessors. A fundamental error persisted in by the British was their insistence that their troops were in the Canal Zone to assure the defence of the Canal, as laid down in the 1936 Treaty, with the underlying assumption that the Egyptian Army was still not capable of carrying out that task. In fact the base has little connexion with the Canal which, during the last war, was of little use to the Allies and will probably be of less utility during the next. The Canal Zone is the West's (not Britain's alone) rear base against any Russian attack against the Middle East, and it is indispensable because nowhere else in the area are to be found the incomparable land, sea, and air communications, the abundant skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labour which was of such great utility to the Allied cause in two world wars, and the military installations, workshops, etc., which remained after the war and have been maintained and improved since the end of hostilities. There is no certainty that a Russian attack could be held, but without the Canal base there could be no sustained attempt to hold it, and the roof which the United States had so laboriously built up in Greece and Turkey would be useless. So far as the Canal itself is concerned, it is probable that the Egyptian Army could defend it against any attack short of a major war. It should surely not have been beyond the ingenuity of British politicians and military chiefs to devise some arrangement which would have flattered Egyptian pride by acknowledging their fitness and right to guard the Suez Canal, and at the same time associated them with us in the maintenance of an Allied or Western base. It should not be forgotten that, bad as may have been our political relations with Egypt, on-the-spot military relations have tended to be good. A great deal of harm was caused by Britain's refusal to continue supplies of arms and ammunition to the Egyptian Army during the Palestine war. Egypt, indeed, considered it effectively ended the 1936 Treaty under which there was to be 'mutual' assistance in time of war, but by 1950 this had ceased actively to rankle, at any rate, with the Egyptian Army. The question of the evacuation, or a temporary or nominal evacuation, of the

Canal base provoked a serious top-level dispute between the Foreign Office and the War Office. The diplomats insisted—and as events have proved, rightly insisted—that evacuation was essential if reasonable relations were ever to be established with Egypt. They argued that once this had been done it would be possible to induce the Egyptians to negotiate a new treaty under which, in the shape possibly of a Joint Defence arrangement, the base could be maintained. But the generals won, the troops were not evacuated, and after nearly two years more of sporadic, inconclusive talks in Cairo and in London, the Egyptian Government, impelled by motives of self-preservation, tore up the 1936 Treaty, and a state of undeclared war sprang into existence between Egypt and British forces in the Canal Zone. There would have been wider world sympathy for Egypt, which might have been considered to be in the grip of a legitimate exasperation at Britain's delaying tactics, were it not for two considerations. In the first place, it was clear to everyone that the Wafd Government's action was not taken in anything like the nation's interests; it was not inspired by any desire to rid the country of an unendurable and harmful foreign occupation which limited her sovereignty and impinged on her independence. The barely concealed reason for Nahas Pasha's sudden abrogation of the treaty was to forestall a move by King Farouk to take advantage of mounting public criticism of the Government's inefficiency and corruption to institute an inquiry into this corruption which would lead to the Wafd's downfall. Once again timely cries of 'Down with the British' lengthily delayed, but have probably not entirely stifled, cries of 'Down with the Government'. In the second place, the timing proved beyond all doubt that the Wafd's motives were entirely personal and that the interests of the small clique of unscrupulous politicians was again placed before those of the nation. The Government were well aware that England, France, Turkey, and America were about to invite Egypt to take part as an equal partner in a new Middle East Defence Command—an invitation which in ordinary circumstances would greatly have gratified Egypt's pride and apart from obvious security advantages could have led to the termination of the British 'occupation' which was onerous only in theory but was beneficial in fact, and its replacement by a Joint Egypto-Western Command of which the material benefits, in the form of general Western aid and continued

and even expanding employment of tens of thousands of Egyptians, would have been even greater, but the invitation, which would have to be considered and might well have given the King an opportunity to dismiss the Wafd on the pretext of setting up an all-party government to discuss so important a step, might well have ended the Wafdist leaders' power—and their consequent ability to continue amassing considerable fortunes.

The immediate results far exceeded the Wafd's wildest hopes. The Egyptian masses, employed over a long period of years as the dupes of self-seeking politicians, taught that all the manifold ills from which they suffer, their poverty, misery, and oppression are not the results of Egyptian maladministration but of British occupation, and fed continuously on deceitful, shameful propaganda, responded wholeheartedly to the carefully phrased incitation. Whether the Wafd had considered what British reaction would be, is doubtful ; from their point of view the situation was too urgent and it is not, anyway, their habit to plan ahead. It is likely, however, that after our capitulation in Persia to much the same kind of blackmail, they expected that we should meekly pack up and leave the Canal Zone. Our blank refusal to go, the rapid strengthening of our forces, and the clear backing we at last received from America placed them in an exceedingly awkward position. The denunciation was an excellent first move : it not only forestalled their dismissal, but made it quite impossible for the King to take any action against them without provoking a revolution, and it effectively prevented any of the opposition leaders or critics within their own ranks from raising a voice against them without immediately being branded as traitors. But they could not let the situation rest there : denunciation had to be followed by action before the mob's anti-British fury died down and dissatisfaction began again to spread. On the other hand, a certain care had to be taken to prevent anti-foreign excesses in the big towns for the West were in no mood to stand aside and watch their nationals being killed and their property looted. The Government were advised that if such a situation did arise there would be active foreign intervention which would have meant in effect the reoccupation of Egypt. So while enormous precautions were taken in Cairo, Alexandria, and elsewhere, the Government encouraged and sponsored the formation of curious bands called 'liberation

groups' and 'struggle squads', which were in effect the Egyptian equivalent of the terrorists who had been so effective in Palestine, whose task it would be to frighten the British out of Egypt. At the same time a campaign of intimidation, organized mainly by the Egyptian police, was directed against the 70,000 Egyptians employed directly or indirectly by British forces and most of them were slowly compelled to leave their jobs. This caused considerable inconvenience to the British and widespread distress and suffering to the Egyptians for the Government were of course unable to find them the alternative employment they had been promised, but it did not lead to a British evacuation.

The Wafdist Government's desperate efforts to maintain itself in office have, in fact, imperilled not only the Wafd but also the existing régime, for in their desire to keep mob passions at boiling point without going to the, to them, dangerous lengths of any open breach with England, they brought into the open, encouraged and even armed two formerly underground, subversive, and destructive forces—the Communists and the fanatical religious organization, the Moslem Brotherhood. They realized too late the extent of their folly and tried to control the twin frankenstein monsters they had nurtured, but far too great an impetus had been given to the gospel of violence for the situation to be brought back to even what passed in Egypt for a normal way of life. In the long run it will probably be Communism that will emerge at the top for it will receive, is in fact already receiving, the outside help and encouragement which the Moslem Brotherhood lack, but temporarily it is probable that the intensely xenophobic movement which demands a return to the strict tenets of the Islamic religion, which loathes and fears anything Western but does not hesitate to employ the refinements of Western destructiveness in achieving its aims, will dominate Egypt. The clash, first between these two forces combined and the thinly spread Westernized classes which have so far ruled Egypt so lamentably, and then when they turn on each other, can only lead to Egypt's collapse into complete anarchy. Under independence, Egypt has moved back far more rapidly than the most pessimistic observers had foreseen to the state of dangerous chaos which impelled the original foreign intervention twenty years ago. The financial motives which then contributed to the Powers' decision no longer exist, but even the steadily built-up

wealth of the cotton crop and the massive fortune which her excessively limited participation in the war brought Egypt can be dissipated if the present disastrous trends continue.

There is a serious danger that the wave of inflamed, insensate nationalism which has already brought Persia to the verge of ruin and is undermining Egypt's far from solid foundations, may spread throughout the Middle East. Leaders in the countries where internal pressure is greatest and which by their relations with England and the West are potential trouble spots—Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and the Lebanon, probably in that order—are more sensible and less corrupt than their Persian and Egyptian counterparts, and they have so far resisted Egypt's blandishments and bullying, but there is no doubt that the combination of nationalist and Left-wing agitation will continue and increase. Egypt's attempts to induce the Arab League to give public support to her attitude towards Britain and to join her in rejecting the West's invitation to co-operate in a Middle East Command have so far failed, firstly because Egypt has mismanaged her relations with the League almost as completely as with Britain and has all along tried openly to dominate the League and make it an instrument of Egyptian policy, and secondly because the idea of a Middle East Command has definite attractions to these little countries which are not yet entirely blinded by internal passions. At meetings held in Paris during the United Nations General Assembly, the Egyptian Foreign Minister went so far as to present to the other Arab representatives a joint declaration affirming their entire support for Egypt and their determination, in effect, to have nothing to do with the West. The Arab leaders refused to sign. They were prepared to announce their support for Egypt in her abrogation of the Treaty and such action as she had taken or might take to implement that decision. But further than that they would not go.

The outlook is, however, far from reassuring. How long the Iraqi leaders will be able to withstand popular clamour for the abrogation of their treaty with Britain and the nationalization of their oil-fields, depends both upon the general world situation and upon events in Egypt. If the West's relations with Russia were to improve and there was a genuine effort to disarm, the Arab countries would see no further reason for a new Command or for security preparations of any kind and would at once bring to an end the slender bonds still

tying them to the West. An increase in world tension, on the other hand, would probably tip the balance in favour of participation in the Middle East Command. Similarly, when the collapse comes in Egypt, it must spread, sooner or later, to the rest of the Middle East, with Iraq likely to be the first country affected. It is a sobering thought that it is just the countries where British influence has been greatest that most dissatisfaction exists, and which are most liable to fall victims to the twin viruses of Communism and nationalism. This is not entirely a reflexion on British methods of administration; nor does it necessarily emphasize any British failure to establish sound relations with the Middle Eastern people. It arises, basically, from the fact that of all the Middle East, except the Lebanon, it is only in Egypt that there has been any widespread education, and the impact of Western education upon the Middle Eastern mind has so far been disastrous. The trouble-makers of Egypt are the effendis—the steadily increasing class of semi-educated, semi-Europeanized graduates of high schools and universities at odds with their own world and imitative of and yet hating the West. They are the tools of self-seeking politicians and they, in their turn, are the leaders of the frightful Egyptian mobs—who, however, are increasingly becoming masters of the situation.

It is difficult to see how the headlong rush towards destruction of the Middle East, led by Egypt, can be checked in time to prevent the final plunge. By the time this book appears in print the partial reoccupation of Egypt may have been necessary to prevent the massacre of the large British and European population—and probably the King and the Pasha class as well—by Communist-led but fundamentally Government-inspired mobs which had become completely out of control. But even if so drastic a step could be sanctioned and undertaken in the world of to-day, and even if it did not, as it well might, provoke a general uprising throughout the Moslem world, it would do no more than provide an uneasy interlude: it would retard rather than expedite a solution to this frightful twin problem of finding a workable basis for our relations with the Arab peoples, and at the same time a means of forcing their leaders to put into operation effective measures for improving the general standards of living, without which, whatever we or they did, Communism must win in the end.

The American solution, of providing financial aid and technical assistance, is useless so long as the distribution of that aid is in the hands of the present Middle Eastern rulers and until means are devised of ensuring that any technical help or advice is effectively followed. So far American assistance has been too little and too late and has always been conditional upon similar but in effect far greater aid for Israel. Even then xenophobic governments have refused the proffered aid unless they had the full control over its disbursement, as any other arrangement would be a reflexion upon their extremely touchy notions of independence and 'national sovereignty'. Absolutely indispensable Point Four aid has repeatedly been turned down because Arab governments refused to comply with the quite small safeguards concerning its use that America wisely demanded. Similarly, one of the reasons why so little has been done for the Palestine refugees is that the excellent large-scale projects which were drawn up by United Nations missions, usually composed mainly of American and British experts, could not be put into execution because the Middle Eastern rulers refused to allow foreigners into their countries to supervise the work. These projects, besides finding useful, paid work for tens of thousands of demoralized Palestinians now just existing in United Nations camps, would have contributed largely towards the advancement and prosperity of the countries in which they would be carried out. Under the Mutual Security Programme of 1951—successor to the old E.C.A.—the Arab countries are to receive \$23,500,000, Arab refugees around \$50 to \$60m.—and Israel roughly the same amount. Even this curious division represents a revolutionary change in American policy, for the programme actively canvassed in Washington was that Israel should get \$150,000,000 and the rest of the Middle East \$50,000,000. It is possible that were 1952 not an election year the final distribution would have more accurately reflected the basic needs of the countries concerned, taking into consideration that the Arab States have a population of 43,000,000, and Israel has 1,300,000. But whether the Arab governments will deign to receive this excessively badly needed assistance must be a matter of doubt.

What is important, however, is that this appropriation reflects a radical change in America's attitude to the Arab Middle East. In fact, the United States is at last adopting a definite Middle Eastern policy. Certainly the inspiration for this change of attitude was almost

entirely strategical and was brought about by the advice of naval and military experts such as the late Admiral Sherman, Admiral Carney, General Eisenhower, and General Bradley, all of whom, in different words, stressed the vital importance of the Middle East to the overall Western defence scheme. The change came too late to allow England and America to present a united front in Persia and divergence of views there contributed largely to our loss of the Persian oilfields. But it came effectively into action when Egypt sought to follow the Persian example and although it is difficult to see how Britain could have taken any other attitude than a firm refusal to be driven out of the Canal Zone, American support materially reinforced our stand. Nothing could be of more importance to the future of the Middle East than a continuation of Western co-operation—for besides America, Britain has received valuable moral support from France, a country which has long been suspicious of and hostile to Britain in the Middle East (and by no means unreasonably so). The serious threat to a joint Anglo-American front will come from American big business and it is to be hoped that the State Department and the service chiefs will be able for once to resist pressure from commercial and financial interests to allow them to take additional advantage of the current anglophobia. Not long, indeed, after Mr. Acheson's reiterated assurances of full American support for Britain in Egypt, a wealthy American oil magnate, working for himself and not for any of the large oil companies, was able, with the assistance of a senior American diplomat, to obtain a concession in Egypt which the Shell Company, which had been working a small oilfield there for years, had been unable to get. It appears that this action had not the support of the American Government and it is not thought to reflect any change in American policy, but it added an inch or two to Egyptian intransigence and belligerence because it seemed to them the first small rift in the new Anglo-American solidarity. That, more important even than a desire to spite England, the reason the concession was given is probably to be found in an Egyptian bank account, would not be appreciated by the Egyptian masses or their newspapers.

The Arab Middle East, which in its present shape is a creation of the inter-war period, has now reached the most critical stage of its development. Its component States have all achieved independence—and the 'fetters' on their freedom of which Egyptian, and to a lesser

extent Iraqi, politicians complain so loudly are almost entirely imaginary—and in the last resort the peoples themselves and their rulers will decide what course their future takes. The outlook is extraordinarily menacing and only a miracle, or a series of miracles, can avert utter disaster. The foundations laid by the Western architects of these newly independent, and in some cases entirely new, countries, have proved to be flimsy and unsound, the material with which they had to build, unpromising in the extreme. Can the structure be shored-up by calling in new experts? Will America's awakened interest in the area prove its salvation? Or must the Middle East follow China and other under-privileged countries into the Russian camp? A possible salvation would be a renewal of foreign—Western—tutelage, but with the vast difference that this time the West would know what had to be done and would know that unless it *was* done an area which is of great, almost vital, importance to the West strategically and commercially, would be irretrievably lost. A new ruling class would have to be found, educated in the modern duties of ruling classes, and coached through its early mistakes. Revolutionary changes would have to be wrought in the entire social structure: great sums of money, on which no return could be expected, would have to be expended by the tutor countries on basic projects such as irrigation, public health, proper roads, social services, and in establishing in these backward, practically feudal Arab countries, something very like a welfare state. Only this could stem the relentless march of Communism which finds an ideal breeding-ground in present conditions everywhere in the Middle East.

Even were this not Utopian, and almost certainly quite unrealizable and unrealistic, the time factor would be against it. At least a decade would be necessary to bring about any real, fundamental change in the Middle East and it is doubtful if the situation will wait ten months. In the immediate future two things are necessary: joint measures of some kind to assure the defence of the area against Communism from without, and the strengthening of national security forces to prevent anarchy from within. To be able to do either of these it is first necessary that a way be found of improving the West's relations with the Middle East—and that is an exceedingly difficult problem. It should be remembered that it would be worse than useless merely to put in our troops and to strengthen, say, the Egyptian

Army to fight Communists, as the Americans did in Greece : Communism in the Middle East is not represented by armed hordes which can be shot down, exiled, or flung into prison ; it is represented by the utter misery of nine-tenths of the population.

The most hopeful approach—which does not unfortunately offer any great hope—would seem to be to concentrate upon the two main trouble spots first : Israel, which is the outstanding passive stumbling block in the way of reasonable relations with the Arab States, and Egypt, which is generally the most active influence in the Middle East. The establishment of Israel, where it is and in the manner of its creation, was the gravest single mistake the Western Powers have made—and much of the blame after World War II is America's. It is an utterly disruptive force and will cause nothing but bad blood in the Middle East for years to come. But whatever happens, America, with Britain dragging reluctantly behind, supports Israel, even when it is flaunting United Nations decisions. When the idea of a new Middle East Defence Command was being mooted, and when Egypt, the first country approached, turned down the invitation, Israel was mentioned in the second batch of invitations, along with the Arab States. It is practically impossible to bring Israel and her Arab neighbours into the same association or club, and when the basic idea of the new Command is to obtain the support of the local peoples for Western measures to defend the Middle East, surely it is clear, or should be clear to the men responsible, that it is only folly to try to bring in an Israel—which anyway will not join. Much is made of the excellence of the Israeli Army. It is true that it is far better than any of the Arab forces as they are now, but on the unescapable fact of numbers alone, it would not be as good as an Arab force that could be produced by co-operation between the Arab and Western worlds. Anyway, Israeli loyalties are quite clearly divided ; its statesmen try hard to make the best of two or three worlds, but, as elections show, and public opinion has declared, a varying proportion of the Israeli population is anti-West if it is not actively pro-Russian. Israel as a partner in any Western defence effort would be a very doubtful asset. Economically the country the Israeli leaders have built and are continuing to build is just not viable and there is no possibility that it will ever be able to live by its own efforts. While Palestine was still under British Mandate, the Jewish Agency, which was the body

responsible for controlling Jewish affairs, was always quarrelling with the Government on the point of the country's 'economic absorptive capacity'. They produced experts to prove that it was anywhere between two million and six million persons. Already, with a population of over one million and a quarter, and which must, unless the Zionist leaders go back on their word, continue to grow, Israel is in such desperate economic straits that no way out can be seen. Already, too, recently brought in immigrants are beginning to leave—when they can get out. What is this country's future? Clearly the attempt to build up a European country in the heart of the Middle East must fail, and gradually, over a long period of years possibly, Israel will sink back to the standards of the surrounding Arab countries, with a population which, as the European Jews leave, will in time become indistinguishable from the other Semitic peoples of the Middle East. But in the meantime, Israel remains the greatest obstacle to Arab co-operation with the West. It is not only the bitterness of the Palestine war when, according to the Arabs, the West supported Israel, that prevents a rapprochement between the West and the Arabs: the three-quarters of a million Palestinian refugees constitute an impenetrable barrier. Solicitous in the extreme to help Jewish refugees—and this was one of the compelling reasons for the foundation of Israel—neither America nor England, nor, indeed, any other country has, until recently, made the slightest real attempt to do anything for the refugees from Palestine. Admittedly the task has not been made easier by the refusal of the Arab States to resettle these refugees. Most certainly no Western Power has tried to bring any influence to bear on Israel to make her observe United Nations rulings on the refugees, and Israel herself has not made one genuine, sincere effort to contribute anything, either in allowing refugees to return to their lands and their homes, or in paying them compensation, towards a solution of this desperate human problem which she herself brought into existence. So long as there is no active interference in Israeli affairs, no attempt by any of the Arab States to invade any part of the new country's territory, Israel could now be left to its own devices, left where it stands and where so many of its people wish it to remain—between two worlds, a foot in the Western and the other in the Eastern camp. The Zionist organizations can continue the role they played so effectively before Israel was brought into being,

of raising funds and spreading propaganda for the Jewish Homeland, but the Western Powers, as such, should no longer interfere, if they consider it is important once again to come to terms with the Arab nations. In fact, the West must choose between Israel and the Arabs, for at the present time, things being as they are, they cannot have the co-operation of both. In reply to anticipated charges of inhumanity, Nazi-ism, and other abuse, I merely point out that what I am suggesting is merely a question of facing facts: these include not only the facts of Israel's economic, political, and international situation but also the defences of the Western world, and of saving a large and important area inhabited by over 40,000,000 people from Communism; and, anyway, Israel would be little worse off than it is at present.

Egypt is an even more difficult problem, for one has not only to deal with a strongly entrenched, corrupt, and selfish ruling class, but also a population which has for some thirty years been unceasingly worked upon by its politicians, leaders, and a venomous Press, who have together distorted and maligned every British action or intention until there is hardly an Egyptian capable of ordinary straight thinking. The latest development in Anglo-Egyptian relations is an excellent example, for a bad situation which anyway need never have arisen had Egypt's leaders been honest and Britain's sensible, has been rendered infinitely worse by quite extraordinary misrepresentation by an Egyptian Government fighting not for their country but to retain their position. With Egypt in its present frame of mind it is difficult to see where a solution can be found. There is possibly a little hope to be gleaned from the definite sense of danger and alarm that is sweeping through the upper classes and the Palace as the internal situation becomes more obviously out of control. Undoubtedly, directly he feels public support for the Wafd has decreased and his own position has become correspondingly stronger, the King will dismiss Nahas Pasha and bring in a more reputable government, albeit, in the nature of political institutions in Egypt, a minority Cabinet, to try to restore order. If this delicate operation can be accomplished without precipitating the revolution, it might then be possible for the West to reach an agreement with Egypt. What is of the utmost importance, however, is that the West—not only Britain and America, but all the Atlantic Pact nations, who are all

concerned in the defence of the Middle East—should present an entirely solid front.

This solidarity indeed presents the only valid hope of establishing proper relations between the West and the Arab world. For too long the West have made the fatal mistake of intriguing against each other, of seeking to set up antagonistic and conflicting 'zones of influence' and, in doing so, to impose upon the Middle Eastern lands economic assistance and military co-operation on terms the local populations have been unwilling to receive and unable to appreciate. Now the issue has narrowed: it is between Democracy and Communism and just as all the forces which spring from and support the Soviet doctrines act in unison and speak with one voice in the attempt to bring the Middle East into their camp, so must the West act in concert to keep it out. The old days of concessions and privileged positions for the Western Powers have gone: in future the West must co-operate in the fullest sense of the word and all connexions, economic, commercial, or military must be on a partnership basis. There must further be an entirely new approach to personal relationships with the people of the Middle East if they are to be rid of their feeling of inferiority and therefore hostility and suspicion. It is a tall order and it is far easier to suggest and outline than to put into operation. But it must be done if the Middle East is to be saved.

EPILOGUE

AT any time in the last seventy years, ever since the opening of the British Occupation of Egypt, it would have been possible to write a book about the Middle East with the certainty that it would never become entirely out-dated by events in the interval between composition and publication. Even in this part of the world situations did change, but never, except for the emergence of the State of Israel, radically, and all that would ever have been necessary was perhaps another chapter. Since the MSS. of this work was sent to the printers a revolution has occurred in Egypt and the situation there has changed beyond all recognition. What I was rash enough to describe as the 'constant factor in Egyptian politics'—the Palace—has disappeared: King Farouk was forced to abdicate, leaving his six months' old son as heir to a throne to which it is unlikely that he will ever succeed. What exactly is going to happen in Egypt is by no means clear yet, but it is safe to say that the old structure has been broken down and that whatever shape the new edifice takes, there can be no reversal to the past: it will definitely be *new*.

What is surprising to all observers of the Egyptian scene is that the revolution should have been bloodless. Revolution was in the air right from the end of 1951, but the odds were that it would be a bloody revolution in the Russian manner. Events were certainly building up to just that. The increasing rashness with which military British leaders handled the explosive situation in the Canal Zone gave both the unpopular Wafdist Government and the two main subversive bodies, the Communists and the Moslem Brotherhood, an opportunity of which they took full advantage. The Wafd, led far more by the Secretary-General, Fuad Sirrag ed Dine Pasha, than by the traditional leader, Mustapha el Nahas Pasha, had abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and established a state of undeclared war with the British forces on Egyptian soil to divert public attention from their own grievous shortcomings. At the beginning this stratagem worked like magic: attention was well and truly diverted from the Government to the British, who once again became the

admirable scapegoats they had been turned into on so many occasions in modern Egyptian history. As at the same time the Government became public heroes it was impossible for King Farouk, who by now realized that he had to subdue the Wafd or lose his dominant position in his own country, to take any open action against them.

But, as suggested earlier in this book, the original red herring tended, after a time, to lose its flavour and its odour: the original anti-British gesture was not enough. It was all very well to order them to go; that roused public feeling to fever pitch. But as they just sat back in the Canal Zone and refused to budge, further governmental action was necessary to maintain the potency of the original diversionary manoeuvre. The steps taken by the Government plus British retaliation plus the now open and legally blessed activities of the previously outlawed anti-social movements led inevitably to the events of 26th January—the Black Saturday Cairo will never forget. For a few hours as flames leaped from building to building and a basically well-organized mob ran riot, Egypt tottered on the verge of real bloody revolution. The Wafd's efforts had succeeded far beyond their wildest expectations, for although it is not suggested that the Government themselves actually organized the riots, they were a direct and inevitable and indeed logical result of months of incitement to violence. It is unlikely that the real organizers of the 26th January riots will ever be discovered: it is clear to anyone who was in Cairo at the time or who has studied the available evidence that there was a definite organizing hand directing the attacks on foreign, mainly British, property, but the mob then joined in and were on the point of taking command: as the Government had probably instructed the Police not to interfere and as the Police themselves, maddened by the previous day's slaughter at the Police Barracks at Ismailia, were more inclined to take part than to maintain order, it is not surprising that the situation was rapidly getting out of control. Then, early in the afternoon, just as British forces were on the point of moving into Cairo, the frightened Government called out the Army—which they should have done far earlier—and in a short time the rioters were dispersed.

This was the Wafd Government's last action. The next day, still in a state of panic, King Farouk dismissed the Wafd and appointed Ali Mahir Pasha to be Prime Minister. His choice was excellent, for

Ali Mahir—brother of the Wafdist Premier, Ahmed Mahir, who was assassinated in 1945—was one of the few honest Egyptian politicians. He had, just before and in the early days of the war when he headed stop-gap governments, shown signs of marked administrative ability and a genuine desire and intention to institute badly needed reforms. He was, further, known to be anti-British and so the change from the Wafd was not so great as to outrage a country which had for months been fed on anti-British propaganda. Slowly, however, the King and the Pasha class generally began to recover from their fright, and the early backing Mahir Pasha had received in his campaign to clean up the administration, discover and prosecute the people responsible for the riots, and break the power of the Wafd, disappeared. Talks between Mahir Pasha and the British Ambassador on a way of settling the Canal Zone dispute and the future of the Sudan produced no useful result, and Mahir Pasha resigned. His successor, Ahmed Neguib el Hilali Pasha, another honest and well-meaning politician, who had for many years been the brains of the Wafd but who was now strongly anti-Wafdist, was also a good choice. But Hilali, too, found the difficulties insurmountable. Egypt was fast slipping back into the general state of corruption, inefficiency, and intrigue which had been its lot for decades. Further, the noxious activities of a few extremely wealthy, utterly unscrupulous and greedy Egyptian industrialists made his task quite impossible. Some of the King's evil advisers, who had been dismissed in the panic-stricken days after the riots, were reinstated and were intriguing with the industrialists for a return to power of the Wafd. As, in addition, Hilali Pasha was unable to obtain from the British Government the concessions on the Canal base and the Sudan which he felt were indispensable if he were to maintain his position and finally break the Wafd, he, too, resigned. There was a short and uneasy interregnum while one of the old favourites, Hussein Sirry Pasha, attempted to form and keep together a new government, and then, quite suddenly, without warning and with quite astonishing efficiency, General Ibrahim Neguib staged his *coup d'état*.

Cairo awoke on the morning of 23rd July to find itself in the grip of a military dictatorship. With hardly a shot fired and no blood spilled a formerly little-known Egyptian General had arrested the pro-Palace General Staff, seized complete control of Cairo, and

presented an ultimatum to the King for the dismissal of the Government. Within hours all Egypt was in Neguib's hands and Ali Mahir Pasha was, at his demand, re-appointed Prime Minister. The King's position was clearly untenable, although at first he seemed prepared to stomach the tremendous blow to his royal pride and remain on the throne as a constitutional monarch, leaving control of the country to General Neguib through the Mahir Government. Three days later, however, there was a threat of a counter *coup* and General Neguib, again acting swiftly and with extraordinary calm efficiency, drove to Ras el Tine Palace in Alexandria, where the Royal family were spending the summer, and demanded that the King sign an act of abdication. Twenty-four hours later Farouk, accompanied by Queen Narriman, their infant son, Prince Ahmed Fouad, and his two eldest daughters by his former wife, Farida, sailed for Capri. In theory, Prince Ahmed Fouad was still heir to the throne: in reality it will probably be found that the Mohammed Ali dynasty has ended.

In many respects, Farouk is a lucky man. Although he has complained publicly that he is now 'a poor man' there is reason to believe that he has considerable wealth and property outside Egypt. He was a bad king, even measured by an oriental yard-stick. He came to the throne with enormous advantages—great personal wealth, a boyish charm which captivated nearly everyone, and a lively, natural intelligence inherited from his father but broadened by a Western education. His early marriage to the charming and quite beautiful Farida added to his popularity, and at first he seemed ready and anxious not, certainly, to be a constitutional ruler but to be an enlightened one. These early advantages were soon frittered away: his large fortune did not prevent his bleeding his country to increase it; his gross tastes and the shocking hangers-on with whom he surrounded himself slowly made his private life shameful to most of his subjects—not, on the whole, a strait-laced or squeamish people. Gradually, too, he became afflicted with a form of megalomania. This resulted not only in his demand that he be recognized as King of the Sudan, but also in his forcing Egypt into the lamentable episode of the Palestine war, against the advice of his Government and military leaders. His unpopularity had reached such heights in the years following the Palestine war that he was heavily guarded on his few public appearances in Egypt and a vast network of political

police, spies and informers had to be maintained to keep down the rising tide of revolt. Not many people expected King Farouk to remain long on the throne of Egypt: even fewer foresaw that he would leave Egypt on his feet, as it were.

It was basically the treatment of the Army and the arms scandals arising out of the Palestine war, when many politicians and industrialists as well as a large number of the King's own entourage made fortunes out of selling the Army unusable arms and supplies, that was responsible for the *coup*. General Neguib's first intention was to avenge the honour of the Army and it was for that reason he had such strong military support amongst all but the King's personal friends who had been given high positions on the Staff. The general drive against corruption, the abolition of titles, the proposed land reforms, and all the other semi-socialist measures which General Neguib, whose only official position is Commander-in-Chief of the Army, is forcing upon the Government, seem to be rapidly acquired second-thoughts. They are admirable and entirely necessary, but are being pressed on at such a pace that there is a danger that they will bring about a collapse of the country's economy, already undermined by Wafdist maladministration. That, basically, is the conflict between General Neguib and Ali Mahir Pasha. The Prime Minister, an ardent and intelligent reformer, and a man of far greater experience in administration than the General, clearly wishes to proceed a little more slowly.

At the time of writing the immediate problem in Egypt is the position of the Wafd. Inspired by General Neguib, one of the first orders given by the Government was that political parties should 'purge' themselves of their 'corrupt elements'—or else they would be forcibly purged by the Government. The Wafd, whose leaders, Nahas Pasha and Serag ed Dine Pasha, rushed back to Egypt from a holiday in Europe, have, with other parties, announced the steps they have taken to get rid of their 'corrupt elements'. Clearly, however, so far as the Wafd is concerned, this would of necessity mean starting at the top—and it is unlikely that party leaders will of their own accord expel themselves from the party. There can be no stability in Egypt until the incubus of the Wafd is lifted. It must be remembered that the Wafd of to-day bears no relation to the original Wafd, which included every well-known politician in Egypt,

except the name 'Wafd' and the mantle of leadership which descended from Saad Zaghlul to the now ageing Nahas. In free elections to-day hundreds of thousands of Egyptians would still vote for the Wafd simply because it is the only political party that means anything to them, the only party of which they have heard. The glamour which Nahas Pasha still exercises because he is 'the great Egyptian leader and the heir of Saad Zaghlul' entirely obscures the fact that, apart from Nahas himself, who is now no more than an extremely useful figure-head, they would be voting for a collection of unscrupulous opportunists trading on the former glories of the Wafd. These strongly entrenched men, who are fighting to retain their position, their power and the wealth they have recently amassed, are the greatest danger to the new régime, for they have the support of all the reactionary classes, the pashas and the industrialists, and will be prepared to use even the Communists and other dissident elements. Once the Wafd is destroyed, the reforms which have begun will be the foundation stone of a new régime which may, if the oppression and maladministration of past decades can be repaired in time, prove a barrier to any further spread of Communism and the ideals of Stalin's reactionary allies in the Moslem Brotherhood.

It would be folly to imagine that the conditions of life in Egypt can be changed over-night. There is so much to be done that it will clearly be years before any really appreciable change can be brought about. The heartening fact is that the plan of reforms is spontaneous, as it were, and not forced on the country's leaders by a revolution of the oppressed classes. This may lead to an acceptance of the new régime, and of its, of necessity, slow endeavours to improve conditions, by the fundamentally meek and long-suffering population. Against this, it must be expected that the Communist leaders, inside and outside of Egypt, will do their best to cause the reforms to fail and to bring about the state of anarchy which, even in Neguib's Egypt, must for long remain only just around the corner.

The vital importance of the new movement in Egypt cannot be under-estimated, for Egypt to-day as never before, is the leader of the Arab world. All over the Middle East eyes are watching Egypt; those of old-fashioned despotic rulers and leaders with fear, the people with hope. Similarly Egypt's relations with the Western world, of great importance in themselves, will find their echo throughout the

Arab world. It is vital that a working defence arrangement should be established between London and Cairo, and indeed between London, Paris and Washington and Cairo. But it would be unwise to rush matters : Egypt must be left for the moment to find her own feet. The outlook is more hopeful now than it was while this book was being written.

PARIS,

August 1952.

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